Predicative Possessive Constructions in Hindi

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Abstract   Hindi has more than one construction for the encoding of possessive relationships: in particular, this language lacks a nominative-accusative construction and a 'have'-verb, and instead encodes possession through intransitive sentences with the Possessor in an oblique case (mainly locative or genitive). This paper describes and analyses the syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic properties of Hindi predicative possessive constructions. It shows that each possessive construction in Hindi is customised to encode particular semantic properties, and that the high iconicity of this language accounts for its lack of a nominative-accusative construction for the expression of possession.

Keywords   Hindi. Predicative possession. Locative constructions. Genitive constructions. Iconicity.

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1   Introduction

The expression of possession has been debated for many decades: since the 1980s, several monographs have been published, both typological (Seiler 1983; Heine 1997; Stassen 2009), and language-specific (see for example, Lehmann 2002 for Yucatec Maya; Taylor 1996 for English; Mazzitelli 2015 for Belarusian and Lithuanian). Despite the numerous contributions that have appeared in recent years, the study of possessive constructions continues to present significant analytical challenges.

On the one hand, possession is a fundamental domain of human experience: possessive constructions can be found in all the languages studied thus far and every human being can conceive – even if only intuitively – the difference between 'what belongs to me' and 'what belongs to someone else' (Heine 1997). On the other hand, it is very difficult to define the semantic and pragmatic parameters that lead scholars to collocate under the same label constructions that, from a purely syntactic point of view, have nothing in common. Indeed, as many typological studies on possession clearly show (Heine 1997; Stassen 2009), global language variations reveal a multitude of syntactic configurations expressing the notion of possession. Some languages (mainly SAE languages) use transitive constructions with 'have'-verbs to encode possessive notion; other languages use intransitive constructions. Many Indo-Aryan languages, for example, lack a verb equivalent to English 'have'. They use intransitive constructions with the Possessor marked in the oblique case and the Possessee in the nominative. This happens for example in Punjabi (Shackle 1972), in Bengali (Thompson 2010) and in Marathi (Dhongde, Wali 2009). The same happens in Hindi, where possession is encoded mainly through genitive or locative existential constructions. To better illustrate this point, let us consider the difference among the three sentences below (1)-(3):

(1)   *tya-la*   *tin*   *sədr-e*   *ahe-t*
       he-DAT   three   shirt-M.PL   be-3PL
       'He has three shirts'.[*] (MARATHI)

       [*]   The example (including transliteration and glossing) is taken from Dhongde, Wali 2009, 197.

(2) *uske pās*   *tīn*   *kamīzeṁ*   *haiṁ*
     3SG.LOC(beside)   three   shirt.F.PL.NOM   to be.3PL.PRS
     'He has three shirts'. (HINDI)

(3) *lui*   *ha*   *tre*   *magliette*
     3SG.NOM   to have.3SG.PRS   three   shirt.F.PL
     'He has three shirts'. (ITALIAN)

Constructions (1) and (2) are intransitive predications in which the first participant is encoded in an oblique case, while the second participant is the syntactic subject; the verb has an existential meaning. Note that in this case there is no lexicalisation of the possessive meaning: the semantics of the construction arises from the global structure of the sentence. The third construction is a transitive predication where the meaning of possession is lexicalised in the verb (*ha* 'has'), the first participant is encoded as a subject, and the second participant is the direct object of the verb. Despite the syntactic differences, these three constructions encode the same possessive meaning.

Further, important problems also arise from a semasiological point of view: what is intuitively identified as a possessive construction can frequently be used to express different semantic notions. To illustrate this point, let us consider some possessive predicates from English, a language with a single possessive verb *have* which covers much more than just the semantics of ownership.

(4) My doctor has a Volkswagen.

(5) Maria has a twin sister.

(6) Everyone has the right to speak.

(7) I have no idea.

(8) That woman has a lot of courage.

As we can see, the single English *have*-construction can express a range of semantic possibilities that goes from *material alienable possession* (see sentence (4), where the notion expressed is that of ownership) to *abstract possession* (sentence (6), where the entity possessed is immaterial) and, through a metaphorical extension, also covers some sub-domains of the *experiential domain* (like *cognition* in sentence (7), where the Possessee is a cognitive status). These extensive semantic uses of the verb *have* are not exclusive to the English language; rather they are quite common (Heine 1997). To further complicate matters, the opposite situation can also occur: a language

can display two or more constructions for the encoding of the possessive domain. In consideration of all these factors, a preliminary distinction needs to be made between genuine possessive constructions (as in the English sentence (4)) and formal possessive constructions (as in the English experiential predicate of sentence (7)), in order to keep distinct the notion of possession as a cognitive domain from possession intended as a linguistic structure (Heine 1997; Langacker 1995; Seiler 1983; Keidan 2008).

In this paper I investigate the syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic properties of Hindi predicative possessive constructions. Hindi has more than one construction for the encoding of possessive relationships, and I will attempt to show that each construction is customised for the encoding of particular semantic properties. The paper is organised as follows: § 2 deals with the formal taxonomies of possessive constructions that have been proposed in the last decades. This paves the way for the exposition of the *construal* of the domain of possession and of the consequences that this conceptualisation has for the linguistic encoding of this notion (§ 3). § 4 analyses the semantic prototype of possessive notions. §§ 5, 6 and 7 present Hindi data from a semasiological point of view and analyse the semantic and syntactic properties of Hindi possessive constructions. Lastly, § 8 draws some conclusions.

2 Formal Distinctions[1]

The first and most basic formal distinction is that between attributive possession (i.e. 'Mark's watch') and predicative possession (i.e. 'Mark has a watch' or 'The watch is Mark's'). Both types of construction are used to express some kind of relation between two entities, but while in the former the relation is presupposed, in the latter it needs to be established. For this reason, attributive constructions consist of a single NP and the relation is internal to it, while predicative possession requires two NPs and the relation is mediated by a predicate. Moreover, while in attributive possession both the Possessor and the Possessee have the same pragmatic role (either the topic or the focus), in predicative possession the Possessor is typically (but not always, as we will soon see) topical (Mazzitelli 2015, 33). The pragmatic difference emerges from the fact that only in attributive possession is the relation already given, while in predicative possession this relationship is established through a predication.

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[1] For an overview of the formal distinctions proposed on possessive constructions, see Heine 1997, 1-43 and Stassen 2009, 3-36.

The ways in which the relation between the Possessor and the Possessee is predicated lead us to two other major distinctions within the macro group of predicative possessive constructions: that between *ascription of possession* and *predication of belonging* (Heine 1997; Seiler 1983; Lehmann 2002; Stassen 2009),[2] and that between *have-possessives* and *be-possessives* (Isačenko 1974; Heine 1997; Keidan 2009). An *ascription of possession* encodes the relation between the two *relata* from a possessor-oriented point of view: it takes the Possessor as the topical item, while the Possessee is the new information and has the role of focus. In *predications of belonging*, instead, the Possessee is the topic, while the Possessor adds new information: this construction encodes the relationship from a possessee-oriented point of view. Two examples from English are given below (examples (9)-(10)):

(9)   ASCRIPTION OF POSSESSION: *Sarah has a red coat.*

(10)   PREDICATION OF BELONGING: *The red coat is Sarah's / The red coat belongs to Sarah.*

The most important difference between *ascriptions of possession* and *predications of belonging* is in the definiteness and topicality of the two items involved: the presence of an indefinite Possessee and of a topical Possessor seems to be the central characteristic of *ascriptions of possession* (Heine 1997, 30), whereas in a *predication of belonging*, the Possessee is typically definite, it being the topic of the sentence. However, it is worth noting that there is also a relevant semantic difference: as Taylor points out, *predications of belonging* allow "only limited extension from the prototype" (Taylor 1989, 205). This means that while *ascriptions of possession* lend themselves to the expression of a large range of semantic notions (as exemplified in the English sentences (4)-(8)), the use of *predications of belonging* seems to be restricted only to the expression of prototypical possession. We will see, in the paragraph dedicated to the Hindi *belong*-construction (§ 6.3), that although *predications of belonging* do not have the same wide semantic functionality of *ascriptions of possession*, they are not limited to the semantic area of prototypical *ownership*, but can also express different notions.

The last fundamental distinction is that between the two syntactic macro-types of *h-possessives* (i.e. have-constructions) and *e-possessives* (i.e. existential-constructions) (Isačenko 1974; Keidan 2008).

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[2]   Terminology varies from linguist to linguist: for instance, Stassen (2009) uses the terms *indefinite possession* and *definite possession*, while Seiler (1983) and Lehmann (2002) prefer the terms *ascription of possession* and *predication of belonging*. Heine (1997) uses the terms *have-constructions* and *belong-constructions*. In this paper we will opt for the terms *ascription of possession* and *predication of belonging*: Heine's terminology could be confused with another formal distinction proposed in literature: that between *have-constructions* and *be-constructions*.

Have-possessive constructions are transitive-agentive configurations where the semantics of possession is lexicalised in a verb. In *have-possessives* languages, the Possessor and the Possesse are metaphorically related to the prototypical Agent and the Patient of a transitive action: the first is encoded as the subject, while the latter is encoded as the direct object of a transitive verb as in the English sentence above 'Sarah has a red coat'. *E-possessives* constructions instead are intransitive constructions with an existential-locative predicate or a copula, as in the Hindi example below (11). In these constructions, the Possessor is encoded in the oblique case and the Possessee always performs the syntactic role of subject.

(11) | *merī* | *bahan* | *ke pās* | *naī* | *sāṛī* | *hai* |
| 1SG.GEN.F | sister.F | LOC(beside) | new.F | sari.F.SG.NOM | to be.3SG.PRS |

'My sister has a new sari'.

3 The Construal of Possession

Like any other situation, possession needs to be conceptualised before being expressed linguistically. A possessive event always involves at least two participants, the Possessor (henceforth PR) and the Possessee (henceforth PE). Even though these two participants are co-dependent (there can be no PR without a PE and no PE without a PR) they are in an asymmetrical relationship. The asymmetry is both semantic – the prototypical PR has the PE at its disposal and controls it, but not vice versa – and pragmatic – prototypically the PR is topical, while the PE is the focus. Normally, the relationship between a PR and a PE is not perceived through the senses by the speaker – as it happens for example in the case of a location, that can be visually perceived – so possession is a relatively abstract domain, quite complex to conceptualise.

According to cognitive studies (Lakoff, Johnson 1980), the conceptualisation of complex cognitive domains usually takes place through processes of simplification: complex and abstract domains are associated with simpler and more concrete ones through the mental processes of metaphor and metonymy. From a linguistic perspective, this means that the encoding strategy of a complex situation is based on the formal expressions of the concrete domains on which the conceptualisation is based. Furthermore, as has been demonstrated by many studies on the genesis of linguistic expressions (Hopper, Traugott 1993), morphological and syntactic elements are the outcomes of processes of grammaticalisation of lexical items referring to concrete concepts.

According to Heine's model (1997), in the genesis of linguistic expressions of possessive situations the same mechanism of simplification comes into play: the complex and abstract domain of possession

is conceived through more concrete domains. In particular, these simpler domains provide the basis for the emergence of what Heine (1997, 46) calls "event schemas", i.e. conceptual archetypes derived through the abstraction of a number of related events experienced through perception. Heine (1997, 46) states:

> What distinguishes an event schemas from simple concepts in particular is that the former are composed of more than one perceptually discontinuous entity. For example, an event schema like "X EATS Y" typically contains three entities, which are X, EAT, and Y. Simple concepts, on the other hand, consist of no more than one entity, even though they may imply the presence of other entities in addition.

From this definition, it follows that formally an *event schema* has the structure of a proposition (and not of a single lexeme), formed by a predicate and the arguments associated with it; **[tab. 1]** shows the eight *source schemas* theorised by Heine (1997).[3]

Table 1   Summary table of predicative possessive constructions (Heine 1997, 47)

Event schema	Formula
Action	X takes Y
Location	Y is located at X
Companion	X is with Y
Genitive	X's Y exists
Goal	Y exists for/to X
Source	Y exists from X
Topic	As for X, Y exists
Equation	Y is X's (property)

According to Heine's proposal, these *schemas* **[tab. 1]** are the conceptual archetypes most used by the languages of the world as the basis for the construal of possession; some examples are given below. One clear instance of the *Action Schema* is the construction with the verb *avere* 'to have' in Italian, as in sentence (12).

(12) *io*   *ho*   *una*   *macchina*   *nuova*
      1SG   have.1SG.PRS   a   car.F.SG   new.F.SG
      'I have a new car'.

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3   For a detailed analysis of each *schema*, see Heine 1997, 45-76.

In this construction, the PR *io* is encoded as the subject of a transitive predication, and the PE, *una macchina nuova*, as the direct object; thus, the two participants are interpreted as an Agent and as a Patient of an agentive situation. As Givón (2001, 134) points out, this type of construction most commonly emerges as a consequence of the semantic shift of verbs such as 'take, 'grab', 'seize', 'get' which lose their original meaning and acquire a bleached meaning of possession. The same semantic bleaching process characterised the evolution of the Latin verb *habere* 'to have' (etymologically related to the Italian verb *avere*), which derives from the PIE root *$g^h h_1 b^{(h)}$-(e)i-* meaning 'to take' (Baldi, Cuzzolin 2005, 29; de Vaan 2008, 277). Thus, in Italian, possessive relationships are construed through the conceptual archetypes of agentive events. Possession is expressed through a nominative-accusative construction, e.g. the construction associated with the prototypical agentive events: the PR is conceptualised as Agent, and the PE is conceptualised as Patient.

A completely different construal of the possessive event is at the basis of Heine's *Location Schema*. An example of this type of construction is the Hindi sentence in (13): the PR is in the oblique case followed by the postposition *-ke pās* 'beside' and the PE is in the nominative and agrees in number with the predicate.

(13) *Sītā* *ke pās*   *naī*   *gāṛī*   *hai*
      Sita   LOC(beside) new.F   car.F.SG.NOM   to be.3SG.PRS
      'Sita has a new car'.

In this type of construction, the PR is conceptualised as the Place where the PE is located: the construction is an intransitive predication where the PR stands in the locative case, while the PE is the syntactic subject; the verb has an existential meaning. Note that, as in the case of the Marathi dative construction in example (1), in this sentence there is no lexicalisation of the possessive meaning: the semantics of the construction is projected by the global structure of the sentence.

4 The Semantics of Possession

Although unanimous consensus on the description of possession has not yet been reached, most scholars discuss possession in light of the theory of prototypes (Seiler 1983; Langacker 1995; Heine 1997; Stassen 2009). According to them, the domain of possession consists of several notions hierarchically organised around a prototypical one. Thus, the primary thrust in the analysis of the semantics of possession has focused upon the individuation of the prototypical possessive notion.

In a cognitive theoretical approach, Langacker (2001; 2009) considers possession as a particular instance of the cognitive strategy that he calls "Reference-point strategy". Langacker starts from the assumption that human beings can create mental access to an indefinite entity, the Target, by directing their attention to another more definite entity functioning as a Reference Point. Thus, for example, in NP 'Mark's watch' the watch the speaker refers to is brought to the mind through the evoking of 'Mark' as a reference point: 'Mark' is evoked in order to establish a mental link with 'his watch'. Langacker identifies three prototypes: ownership, kinship and part-whole relationship, and he maintains that their prototypicality is a consequence of the fact that their possessors naturally lend themselves to the reference-point function. In these prototypical cases, the relationship that is used as the basis for the reference-point strategy is "objectively construed", meaning that it exists in the real world; whereas in non-prototypical cases, the reference-point strategy is applied through means of metaphorical or metonymical extensions, and it is "subjectively construed" (Langacker 2009, 84).

Heine (1997) and Stassen (2009), in contrast to Langacker, do not focus their analysis on the cognitive function of the possessive construction, but rather on its semantic parameters. Following an approach that can be reconnected to the semantic binary features approach, they ultimately detect only one prototypical notion. They assume that the fundamental parameters required by a possessive relationship are the control that the PR has over the PE, the proximity between them and the lack of a temporal limit. Following Taylor (1989), Heine proposes a wider range of semantic properties for the individuation of the prototypical notion, adding to the parameters listed above the concreteness of the PE and the humanity of the PR (Heine 1997, 39). Stassen's and Heine's proposals are quite similar: according to them both, *ownership*[4] is the prototypical possessive notion characterised by the maximum control of the PR over the PE, by spatial proximity and by the absence of a temporal limit. The further a

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4 Note that the same notion has been identified with different labels: for example, Stassen (2009) uses the term "alienable possession", while Heine (1997) calls it "permanent possession".

possessive notion strays from this prototype, the less it evinces those three fundamental parameters. As a logical consequence of the theoretical differences between Heine and Stassen's approach and Langacker's, the conclusions resulting from their studies differ markedly from those derived from Langacker's model. For example, inalienable possession cannot be considered prototypical, as it is in Langacker's model, since there is a lack of control on behalf of the PR, who cannot decide to break the relationship, and the proximity between the PR and the PE is not necessarily spatial.

In this paper, I follow Heine and Stassen's proposal, and I assume that the notion of *ownership* as defined below is the prototypical one:

> OWNERSHIP
> An asymmetrical relationship between two entities: a PR which must be [+HUMAN] and a PE which must be [-ANIMATE] and [+CONCRETE]. The PR has control over the PE and the relationship has no temporal limit.

The range of notions conceived within the possessive domain varies from scholar to scholar: Heine (1997, 34-40) distinguishes seven possessive notions, e.g.: permanent possession (i.e. ownership), physical possession, temporal possession, abstract possession, inalienable possession, inanimate inalienable possession, inanimate alienable possession; Stassen (2009, 16), in contrast, proposes a conceptual space of four notions: alienable possession (i.e. ownership) inalienable possession, temporary or physical possession, and abstract possession. In this paper, I assume that one of the fundamental properties of possession is the humanness of the PR, and following Stassen (2009, 17) I exclude inanimate possession from my analysis, considering it to be merely a metaphorical extension of possession.

The following paragraphs focus on the Hindi expression of the four possessive sub-domains proposed by Stassen (2009). These possessive notions can be described with reference to the different values they assume in regard to the properties of control, temporal limit and spatial proximity. Specifically, they can be defined as follows:

- Ownership, as defined above.
- Temporary possession and physical possession: the PR can dispose of the PE, even if he/she does not own it, as in the sentence 'I have an apartment where I can stay when I spend the night in London; it belongs to my uncle'. In physical possession, the PR and the PE are physically associated, and the PE is available to be used by the PR even though not belonging to him/her, as in 'I have my sister's keys with me'.
- Inalienable possession: the relationship between the PR and the PE is considered to be inherent, and usually the PE is not a material object but a body-part or a person. Moreover, the PR has

no control in the relationship: the parameter of control implies that the PR can choose when to break the relationship, and in inalienable possession the PR does not have this power. Consider the English example: 'That girl has three brothers'.

- Abstract possession: the PE is an abstract entity or an experiential state like an emotion or a body-sensation, as in the English sentence 'I have a headache'.

5   The Hindi Expression of Possession

Unlike most SAE languages, Hindi does not have a single construction that covers all the semantic notions identified in the previous paragraph (§ 4), exemplified by the English sentences (4)-(8). Instead, it uses different constructions, each one specialised for the encoding of particular semantic features. Let us see the Hindi translation of the English sentences (4)-(8) (sentences (14)-(18)):

(14)   My doctor has a Volkswagen.
        [HUMAN-MATERIAL ENTITY]: [Ownership] → Locative construction
        mere   ḍākṭar   ke pās   Volkswagen   hai
        1SG.GEN.M   doctor.M   LOC(beside) Volkswagen.NOM   to be.3SG.PRS

(15)   Maria has a twin sister.
        [HUMAN-HUMAN]: [Inalienable possession: Kinship] → Genitive construction
        Maria   kī   ek   juṛvāṁ bahan   hai
        Maria   GEN.F   one   twin-sister.F.SG.NOM   to be.3SG.PRS

(16)   Everyone has the right to speak.
        [HUMAN-ABSTRACT ENTITY]: [Abstract possession] → Dative construction
        sab   ko   bolne   kā   adhikār   hai
        everyone   DAT   to speak.INF.OBL   GEN.M   right.M.SG.NOM   to be.3SG.PRS

(17)   I have no idea.
        [HUMAN-COGNITION]: [Abstract possession: Experience] → Dative construction
        mujhe   khabar   nahiṁ   hai
        1SG.DAT   information.SG.NOM   not   to be.3SG.PRS

(18)   That woman has a lot of courage. [HUMAN-QUALITY]: [Abstract possession: Quality] → Inessive construction
        us   aurat   meṁ   bahut   sāhas   hai
        that.OBL   woman.SG.OBL   LOC(in)   a lot of courage.SG.NOM   to be.3SG.PRS

This behaviour is typical of Hindi, a language exhibiting a number of syntactic patterns selected on the basis of semantic parameters. This peculiarity of Hindi has led Montaut (2004a; 2013) to define these patterns as semantic alignments (following the definition given in Wichmann 2008) rather than syntactic ones. In fact, Hindi clearly encodes semantic roles in a rather iconic way and applies each syntactic pattern to specific semantic features, mainly related to the most salient participant and to the type of the event (Montaut 2004b).

Thus, for example, the use of the transitive-ergative pattern in Hindi is generally restricted to prototypical Agents volitionally acting and controlling the scene. When the Agent does not control the event, another pattern is chosen e.g. the instrumental one.[5] Similarly, when

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5 One of the reviewers highlights that the ergative construction in Hindi has many deviations from the principle of iconicity. I agree with him/her that ergative marking in Hindi seems to be partly triggered by syntactic features, however the correlation between ergativity, syntax and semantics in Hindi is not easy to understand. For example, one of the main arguments used to demonstrate that ergativity depends also on syntax is that volitional Agents are not marked by ergative postposition if the predicate is expressed by compound verbs with intransitive light verbs. However, Drocco (2018) and Drocco, Tiwari (2020) showed that when transitive verbs are followed by intransitive light verbs (like *baiṭhnā* or *jānā*) "the meaning conveyed is that the Agent-like argument either acted foolishly, or unconsciously, or lost control over his actions, or was even forced to do something against his wishes" (Drocco, Tiwari 2020, 329). While the Agent argument is not marked with the ergative case, and this seems to be triggered by syntactic properties (since it happens when the light verb is intransitive), we cannot ignore the fact that compound verbs' constructions have also semantic consequences and when the light verb is intransitive the construction seems to express reduced transitivity.

Undoubtedly more work needs to be done to understand the correlation between ergativity and iconicity in Hindi, but many arguments can be given to support the thesis of iconicity. For example, the single argument of a set of 'body emission' predicates can be optionally marked with the ergative case. When this happens, the ergative case-marking encodes a more like prototypical Agent: volitional and in control of the event (Mohanan 1994; de Hoop, Narasimhan 2005). Moreover, there are clearly contrasting examples showing that the ergative marking brings with itself the semantics of agentivity, as opposed to other case markings:

Dative Experiencer vs Ergative Experiencer:

sahsā	*use*	*maṁṛēyā*	*ke sāmne*	*cūṛiyoṁ*	*kī*
suddenly	3SG.DAT	shed	PSP(in front of)	bracelet.F.OBL	PSP.GEN.F
jhaṁkār		*sunāī dī*	*usne*	*kān lagākar*	
tinkle.F.SG.NOM		to hear.PRF.F.SG	3SG.ERG	strain the ear.CVB	
sunā		*hāṁ, koī hē*			
listen.PRF.M.SG		Yes there was someone			

'Suddenly he heard the tinkle of bracelets outside the shed. He strained his ears and listened. Yes, there was someone'.

Instrumental Agent vs Ergative Agent:

A	*tum-hīṁ*	*ne*	*us-kā*	*khūn*	*kiyā*
	2SG-EMPH	ERG	3SG-GEN	blood	to do.PRF.M.SG

the perceiver of a visual or auditory perception is agentive and he/she controls the perception, the pattern selected is the transitive one and the perceiver is encoded as the Agent (in the NOM/ERG). However, when the perception is not controlled by the perceiver, s/he is encoded as an Experiencer e.g. in the dative case: the choice thus evolves from the semantic parameters of the event.

Literature on case (Mallinson, Blake 1981; Comrie 1989; Malchukov 2005; 2015; de Hoop, Narasimhan 2005) generally distinguishes two main functions of case-marking: the so-called indexing function and disambiguating function. The indexing function uses cases to express semantic roles (or specific semantic features of the argument), while the disambiguating function uses cases mostly or exclusively to mark core arguments and express grammatical relations. Following this distinction, Malchukov (2005; 2015) proposes two typological tendencies determining case-marking cross-linguistically:

- Iconicity, which implies the "choice of the most semantically fitting frame" (Malchukov 2005, 85) when encoding semantic roles, thus favouring the indexing function.
- Markedness, which implies the "choice of the transitive frame as a major default pattern" (Malchukov 2005, 85) for the expression of most events, thus favouring the distinguishing function.

Languages of the world vary in their ways of ranking these two parameters. Languages that rank Iconicity over Markedness are more concerned with the faithful encoding of the semantic features of their arguments: these languages tend to not extend the use of transitive constructions to non-transitive events, because in such languages transitive constructions are semantically constrained to prototypical transitivity. In contrast, languages that favour Markedness over Iconicity are more concerned with the differentiation of the two principal syntactic elements (the subject and the object) from peripheral arguments, and therefore they tend to use transitive patterns by default, regardless of the semantic properties of the event.

B	*sāhab*	*maiṁ-ne*	*us-kā*	*khūn*	*nahīṁ*	*kiyā*	*mujhse*
	sir	1SG-ERG	3SG-GEN	blood	not	to do.PRF.M.SG	1SG.INS
	ho gayā						
	happen.PRF.M.SG						

AB 'It's you who murdered him *Sir, I did not kill him, it happened by myself (I did it unconsciously)*'.
(Example taken from Montaut 2004a, 211)

Unfortunately, a discussion on the correlation between ergativity and iconicity in Hindi is beyond the scope of the present paper; for a thorough investigation upon differential subject marking and indexing function in Hindi the reader can refer to de Hoop, Narasimhan 2005 and Mohanan 1994. For a detailed overview of the study of the interaction between ergativity and semantic transitivity, see Drocco 2008.

With possessive constructions, the interaction between these two parameters determines the typological variability between *have*-possessives and *be*-possessives languages. Languages that rank Markedness over Iconicity are nominative-accusative languages (like English and Italian) that tend to extend the transitive pattern (e.g. Heine's *Action Schema*) to non-transitive events, thus encoding the participants of most events with the nominative and accusative cases, without regard for the semantic properties of the arguments. Languages that rank Iconicity over Markedness, instead, do not extend the transitive construction to encode possessive notions, it being specialised for the encoding of Agentive Events.

In Tsunoda's Implicational Hierarchy of Transitivity (Tsunoda 1985; 2015; tab. 2), possessive events are the most distant from the prototypical transitive ones:[6] a prototypical transitive event is dynamic and concrete, characterised by an intentionally acting Agent and by a Patient that is directly affected in a perceptually salient way (Kittilä 2002, 190). A possessive event lacks both of these properties: it has neither an intentionally acting Agent nor an affected Patient, and in fact it is not even a dynamic event, but rather a stative one. This explains why the *Action Schema* is not often employed among the languages of the world since most languages encode possession with intransitive sentences having an oblique PR and a nominative PE. Heine (1997, 75) points out that remarkably only 13.6% of the languages in the world use the *Action Schema* as their major *schema* to express possession. Only highly nominative-accusative languages (like many SAE languages) allow the extension of transitive constructions to stative situations by using transitive verbs such as Eng. *have* or It. *avere* that lexicalise the semantics of possession.

Table 2 Tsunoda's Implicational Hierarchy of Transitivity (Tsunoda 2015, 1598)

Type	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Meaning	Direct effect on patient	Perception	Pursuit	Knowledge	Feeling	Relationship	Ability
Examples			search, wait, await	know, understand, remember, forget	love, like, want, need, fond, fear, afraid, angry, proud, boast	possess, have, lack, lacking, resemble, similar, correspond, consist	capable, proficient, good

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6 Notably, Malchukov (2005; 2015) does not even include possessive verbs in his two-dimensional Transitivity Hierarchy.

Subtype	1A Resultative	1B Non-resultative	2A Patient more attained	2B Patient less attained
Examples	kill, break, bend	hit, shoot, kick	see, hear, find	look, listen

Montaut (2004a; 2004b) points out that the action model (i.e. transitive pattern) in Hindi is clearly marginal and it is restrained to action processes where the action chain is fully profiled (imperfective aspect). She lists six basic patterns in Hindi which she defines as follows (Montaut 2004b, 51):

1. the nominative accusative diathesis represents action processes;
2. the ergative diathesis encodes action processes but viewed from the viewpoint of the result (aspectual split), and not as an action;
3. the dative diathesis describes experiential processes;
4. the instrumental diathesis describes non-volitional actions in the affirmative and unfeasible actions in the negative, centred on actors lacking some of the features of the agent;
5. the locative and genitive diatheses describe states.

Montaut states that patterns from 2 to 5 are "absolute construals" (as defined by Langacker 1999), where the less salient entity is the starting point from the linguistic viewpoint and the most salient argument is dissociated from the predication and encoded iconically. Following Montaut, I propose that predicative possessive constructions in Hindi are realised as absolute predications where the less salient entity – the PE – is encoded as the subject, while the PR is dissociated from the predication and its case marking is semantically constrained and depends on the semantic properties of the relation. This would explain the variety of constructions that Hindi uses to translate English possessive sentences from (4) to (8): as we have seen each construction expresses a different possessive situation.

6 Presentation of Hindi Data

In the next paragraphs, I propose a semasiological presentation of possessive constructions in Hindi. The examples shown in these paragraphs are taken from a classic of modern Hindi literature, *Godān* by Munshi Premcand, published in 1936. This corpus has been interrogated through SketchEngine.[7]

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7 https://www.sketchengine.eu.

As scholars of Hindi know well,[8] this language uses at least two different possessive constructions for the encoding of prototypical possession: both are existential constructions, the first encoding the PR in the oblique case followed by the locative postposition *-ke pās* 'beside', and the second encoding it in the genitive. First, the locative construction (§ 6.1), which can express the notion of ownership but can also express physical possession and temporary possession, is discussed. In §§ 6.2-6.4, an analysis of the genitive pattern, which can express the prototypical notion of ownership, and which is more frequently used for the encoding of inalienable relationships, is presented. In § 6.5 other non-prototypical uses of these constructions are considered. Finally, § 7 focuses on the analysis of the dative construction and inessive constructions, which can express only abstract possession and do not allow the encoding of more prototypical notions.

6.1 The Locative Construction

The pattern of the locative construction is as follows: the PR NP is in initial position, marked in the oblique case and followed by the postposition *-ke pās*, which means 'beside' and is normally used for the encoding of locations; next comes the PE, marked in the nominative case; and in the final position there is the verb *honā* 'to be', which agrees in number and person (in past tenses also in gender) with the PE and has an existential function. This construction can be schematised as follows: *Y is at X's place > X has, owns Y* and can be associated with Heine's *Location Schema* (Heine 1997, 51).

Before continuing with the exposition, it is essential to briefly examine the use of the compound postposition *-ke pās* to better understand the examples and their glosses. Like any other compound postposition in Hindi, the postposition *-ke pās* is composed of the simple genitive postposition (in this case *-ke*) followed by an adverb (in this case *pās* 'near'). When compound postpositions follow a noun, they are attached to its oblique form, as in example (19), but when they follow a personal pronoun, the possessive form of the pronoun, rather than its oblique form followed by the genitival postposition, is required, as in sentences (20)-(21).

(19) *Mehtā   ke pās   sāmān   to jyādā na   thā*
     Mehta   LOC(beside) belongings.M.SG.NOM many   not   to be.3SG.PST.M
     'Mehta didn't have many belongings'.

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8 Kachru 1970; Montaut 1997; 2004a; Mohanan 1994; Pandharipande 1981.

(20) *lekin*   *mere pās*   *nagad*   *nahīṁ*   *hai*
but   1SG.LOC(beside)   cash.SG.NOM   not   to be.3SG.PRS
'But I have no cash'.

(21) *hamāre pās*   *jo*   *kuch*   *hai*   *vah*
1PL.LOC(beside)   REL.ADJ.DIR   something.NOM   to be.3SG.PRS   CRR.PRN.NOM
abhī   *khalihān*   *meṁ*   *hai*
now   barn   PSP(in)   to be.3SG.PRS
'What we have now is in the barn'.

Note that the possessive construction with the postposition *-ke pās* is
formally identical to the Hindi locative construction. In truly locative
constructions, the location argument is in the oblique case followed
by the postposition *-ke pās* (as the PR in the possessive construction),
with the entity located appearing in the nominative case (as the PE) and
the predicate being the existential verb *honā* 'be'. The most important
difference between these two sentence-types is the semantics of their
two arguments: when the argument preceding the postposition *-ke pās*
is [+HUMAN] and the second argument is [-ANIMATE], the resulting
construction is a possessive one. Remarkably, the semantics of pos-
session is not lexicalised in a lexical item, but rather it emerges from
the instantiation of the locative construction through these specific se-
mantic features. If these features are absent, then the resulting con-
struction has a locative meaning. See the examples below (22a)-(22d):[9]

(22a) 1° argument: [+HUMAN]; 2° argument: [-ANIMATE]: Possession
uske pās   *qalam*   *hai*
3SG.LOC(beside)   pen.SG.NOM   to be.3SG.PRS
'He has a pen'.

(22b) 1° argument: [- HUMAN]; 2° argument: [- ANIMATE]: Location
kitāb   *ke pās*   *qalam*   *hai*
book   LOC(beside)   pen.SG.NOM   to be.3SG.PRS
'Next to the book, there is a pen'.

(22c) 1° argument: [- HUMAN]; 2° argument: [+HUMAN]: Location
gāṛī   *ke pās*   *Sītā*   *hai*
car   LOC(beside)   Sita.NOM   to be.3SG.PRS
'Next to the car, there is Sita.'

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[9]   Examples (22a)-(22d), (23a)-(23b), example (43) from § 6.4 and examples (52)-(53)
from § 7.1 are not taken from the corpus.

(22d) 1° argument: [+ HUMAN]; 2° argument: [+HUMAN]: Location

Sītā	*ke pās*	*merī*	*bahan*	*hai*
Sita	LOC(beside)	1SG.GEN.F	sister.F.SG.NOM	to be.3SG.PRS

‘Next to Sita, there is my sister’.

Some other semantic and syntactic features also differentiate the possessive construction from the locative. In particular:

1. Only in a locative construction can the postposition *-ke pās*, normally meaning ‘beside’, be exchanged with some other synonymic postpositions, like *-ke bagal meṁ* or *-ke nikaṭ* ‘next, near to’. The possessive construction does not allow for the interchangeability of *-ke pās* with other locative postpositions; if another locative postposition is selected, the resulting construction acquires an existential-locative meaning. See the contrasting examples below (23a) and (23b).

(23a)

Rām	*ke pās*	*naī*	*kitāb*	*hai*
Ram	LOC(beside)	new.F	book.F.SG.NOM	to be.3SG.PRS

‘Ram has the new book’.

(23b)

Rām	*ke bagal meṁ*	*naī*	*kitāb*	*hai*
Ram	LOC(beside)	new.F	book.F.SG.NOM	to be.3SG.PRS

‘Next to Ram there is the new book. *Ram has the new book’.

This phenomenon may be explained by the fact that the locative construction instantiated with a [+HUMAN] location and a [-ANIMATE] second argument has undergone a grammaticalisation process causing the desemantisation of the postposition *-ke pās*, which, in this context, has lost its original lexical meaning.

- Only in a possessive sentence is the element preceding the postposition *-ke pās* endowed with some non-nominative subjects' properties. First, in non-pragmatically marked possessive constructions, the PR is in initial position, whereas in non-marked locative constructions, the element followed by the postposition *-ke pās* is preverbal and the subject is in initial position. Secondly, only the PR governs coreference with the reflexive pronoun *apnā*: see the example (24).

(24)

mere pās	*apne*	*dost*	*kī*
1SG.LOC(beside)	REFL.ADJ.M.SG.OBL	friend.M.SG.OBL	GEN.F
kitāb	*hai*		
book.F.SG.NOM	to be.3SG.PRS		

‘I have my friend's book’.

As mentioned in § 2, the prototypical information structure of an *ascription of possession* requires a topical PR with the PE as the comment. As Keidan (2008, 349) points out, "the topicality we are concerned with here belongs primarily to the cognitive domain, not simply to the grammatical level". An *ascription of possession*, indeed, encodes the relation between the two *relata* from a possessor-oriented point of view, taking the PR as the starting point for the predication of the relationship. Languages use different ways to mark the topicality of the PR: *have-possessives* languages, for example, raise it to the syntactic status of subject. In these languages, the PR is marked as a nominative and combines various syntactic properties of subjecthood (Kibrik 1997; Onishi 2001). As noted above, Hindi is a highly iconic language: it uses cases to faithfully encode the thematic properties of the most salient element. Moreover, as Montaut (2004b, 51) points out, in Hindi

> the profiled segment always leaves the cognitively more salient entity in a secondary position, so that the less salient entity is the starting point from the linguistic viewpoint. Hindi indeed shows a clear preference for profiling less salient entities as starting points in asymmetric relations.

This means that while Hindi encodes the more salient entity in the sentence through an iconic use of case marking, it assigns the nominative to the less salient entity by default. In *ascriptions of possession*, the PR is always more salient than the PE, as it is prototypically [+HUMAN] and the topical element. Consequently, in Hindi possessive sentences the syntactic properties of subjecthood are split between the PR and the PE: this explains why the PR, even if marked as a locative, is endowed with such syntactic properties as initial position in the unmarked sentence and the control of coreference with reflexive pronouns and adjectives.[10]

Let us now move on to the semantics of this type of possessive construction. As already mentioned above, the locative construction with the postposition *-ke pās* can express the notions of ownership, temporary possession, and physical possession. Examples are given in sentences (25)-(27). This pattern is thus characterised by a certain degree of ambiguity: it is only the context that helps us to understand what type of possessive notions the construction is encoding.

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10 Remarkably, Montaut (2004b, 51) points out that "full subjecthood is restricted in Hindi/Urdu to action phrases and single arguments of simple verbs". Moreover, discussing the notion of subject in Hindi, Drocco (2008, 40-1) points out that "l'analisi relativa alla determinazione del soggetto in hindī è stata infatti effettuata basandosi non tanto sulle proprietà di codifica, bensì sulle proprietà relative al controllo dei diversi processi sintattici" (Author's transl.: 'The study of the notion of subjecthood in Hindi has been carried out not through the analysis of the coding properties of the argument, but through the analysis of its behavioral properties: i.e. through syntactic tests').

(25) *hamāre pās   ilāke,   mahal,   savāriyāṁ*
     1PL.LOC(beside)   land.M.PL.NOM   palace.PL.NOM   carriage.F.PL.NOM
     naukar-cākar   haiṁ
     servant.PL.NOM   to be.3PL.PRS
     'We have lands, palaces, carriages, servants'.

(26) *hamāre pās   becne   ko   bhūsā   nahīṁ*
     1PL.LOC(beside)   to sell.INF.OBL   PSP(to)   straw.SG.NOM   not
     hai
     to be.3SG.PRS
     'We have no straw to sell'.

(27) *jiske pās   jo   kuch   ho,*
     REL.PRN.LOC(beside)   REL.ADJ.DIR   INDF.PRN.NOM   to be.3SG.SBJV
     nikālkar   rakh de
     take.out.CVB   to put.3SG.SBJV
     'Take out what you have and put it here'.

6.2   The Genitive Construction

As noted by many scholars of Hindi (Caracchi 2002; Pandharipande 1981; McGregor 1972; Mohanan 1994), in this language the notion of *ownership* can also be expressed by a genitive construction. The pattern of this construction is as follows: the PR is in initial position and is marked in the genitive case, the PE is in preverbal position marked in the nominative case and the predicate is expressed by the existential verb *honā* 'be'. The verb agrees in number and person (in gender in past tenses) with the PE. Note that the PR is marked in the oblique case and followed by the genitive postposition *-kā* (*/-ke/-kī*) which agrees in gender and number with the PE, thus forming an adjectival unit with the PR: see examples (28a)-(28c). In particular, the genitive form *-kā* is the masculine singular form, while the masculine plural is *-ke*; the feminine form is *-kī* and it is the same for both the singular and the plural. As in the case of the locative postposition *-ke pās*, when the genitive postposition *-kā/-ke/-kī* follows a personal pronoun, the possessive form of the pronoun is required, as exemplified in (28d) and (28e).

(28a) *bacc-e   k-ā   ḍibb-ā*
      child.M.SG.OBL   GEN.M.SG.DIR   box.M.SG.DIR
      'The child's box'.

(28b) *bacc-e   k-e   ḍibb-e*
      child.M.SG.OBL   GEN.M.PL.DIR   box.M.PL.DIR
      'The child's boxes'.

(28c) *bacc-e*   *k-ī*   *kitāb*
     child.M.SG.OBL   GEN.F   book[F.SG]
     'The child's book'.

(28d) mer- *ā*   *ḍibb-ā*
     1SG.GEN.M.SG.DIR   box.M.SG.DIR
     'My box'.

(28e) *mer-ī*   *kitāb*
     1SG.GEN.F   book[F.SG]
     'My book'.

This construction corresponds to Heine's *Genitive Schema*, summarised in the formula: *X's Y exists > X has Y* (Heine 1997, 58). An example is given below (29):

(29) *unkī*   *tīn*   *laṛkiyāṁ*   *thīṁ*
    3PL.GEN.F   three   daughter.F.PL.NOM   to be.3PL.PST.F
    'He had three daughters'.

Notably, as in the case of locative constructions, the PR marked with the genitive case acquires some syntactic properties of subjecthood: it is always in the initial position, and it controls the coreference with the reflexive pronoun and coreferential deletion; see the example (30) taken from Montaut (2013, 93).

(30) *merā*   *apnī*   *bahan*   *se*   *milne*   *dillī*
    1SG.GEN.M.SG   REFL.F   sister   COM   to meet.INF.OBL   delhi
    jāne   *kā*   *irādā*   *thā*
    go.INF.OBL   GEN.M.SG   intention.M.SG.NOM   be.PST.M.SG
    'I intended to visit my sister in Delhi'. (Lit. 'I had the intention to visit my sister in Delhi')

In many contexts, genitive constructions and locative constructions are semantically interchangeable (Mohanan 1994, 178): a sentence of the type 'That man owns a huge house' can be translated into Hindi with either a genitive construction (example 31) or a locative construction (example 32):

(31) *us*   *admī*   *kā*   *ek*   *bahut*   *baṛā*
    that.OBL   man.SG.OBL   GEN.M.SG   one   very   big.M.SG.DIR
    makān   *hai*
    house.M.SG.NOM   to be.3SG.PRS

(32) | *us* | *admī* | *ke pās* | *ek* | *bahut* | *baṛā* |
that.OBL	man.SG.OBL	LOC(beside)	one	very	big.M.SG.DIR
makān		*hai*			
house.M.SG.NOM		to be.3SG.PRS			

McGregor (1972, 51) suggests that there is a semantic difference between the two constructions: while the genitive construction expresses a permanent possessive relationship, the locative pattern is used for more contingent relationships, e.g. what has been identified here as temporary and physical possession. Even if it is true that the locative construction can be used to express non-permanent possession (as noted in § 6.1), some scholars have shown that such a semantic distinction is not applicable.

Mohanan (1994, 179), for example, points out that both constructions can be modified by a subordinate clause of the type "which he is trying to sell" thus implying that the genitive construction can also express permanent possession. In the same way, both sentences can be modified by the clause "which he will hand down to his children", thus implying that locative constructions, too, can encode permanent possession. Pandharipande (1981) suggests that the selection of the genitive construction for the encoding of alienable possession is determined by how the relation between the PR and the PE is perceived by the speaker. A peculiarity of the genitive construction is that most characteristically it involves concrete entities as PE (like *estates*, *buildings* and *lands*) that are normally perceived as being less alienable than the entities frequently involved in locative constructions (like *money*, *books*, etc.). Moreover, the genitive construction expressing *ownership* typically occurs when the PE is perceived to be particularly close to the personal sphere of the PR; in this regard, notice the contrasting following examples (33)-(34).

(33) | *uske* | *maurūsī* | *pāṁc* | *bīghe* | *khet* | | *haiṁ* |
| 3SG.GEN.M.PL | inherited | five | bighe | field.M.PL.NOM | | to be.3PL.PRS |

'He has an inherited field of five bighe [Indian unit of measure]'.

(34) | *hamāre pās* | *ilāke,* | | *mahal,* | *savāriyāṁ* |
1PL.LOC(beside)	land.M.PL.NOM		palace.PL.NOM	carriage.F.PL.NOM
naukar-cākar		*haiṁ*		
servant.PL.NOM		to be.3PL.PRS		

'We have lands, palaces, carriages, servants'.

In sentence (33), the speaker is answering another character who asked him whether his family owns land. In his answer, the speaker chooses to express the notion of ownership through a genitive construction: the PR is a peasant family who inherited the PE – a land – and

who is particularly attached to it, having cultivated it for generations. In sentence (34), the PR is a *zamīndār*. *Zamīndārs* were large land-owners who did not have the same attachment to the land, as it was worked by others. Consequently, in this context the notion of ownership is expressed by a locative construction. Thus, the genitive construction is generally associated with a more intimate possessive relationship, in which the PR is perceived as emotionally attached to the PE; on the other hand, the locative construction seems to be used for the expression of mere legal ownership. Sentence (35) offers a further interesting example:

(35) *Agar vah ek bīghā bhī bec de, to sau mil jāyaṁ, lekin kisān ke liye jamīn jān se bhī pyārī hai, kul-maryādā se bhī pyārī hai;*
'If he sold even one bigha of land, he could get a hundred rupees. But to a peasant, land is dearer than life, dearer even than family reputation;'

aur	*kul*	*tīn*	*hī*	*bīghe*	*to*	*uske pās*	*hai,*		*agar*
and	total.NOM	three	just	bighe		3SG.LOC	to be.3SG.PRS		if
ek	*bīghā*	*bec de*			*to phir*	*khetī*		*kaise*	*karogā*
one	bigha	to sell.3SG.SBJV			then	cultivation		how	to do.3SG.FUT

'And he had just three bighe of land, if he were to sell one bigha, how could he live off the land?'

In sentence (35), the PR is a peasant whose family has been living under the poverty threshold for a while, and who is considering the idea of selling a part of his land to make some money. However, his biggest concern derives from the emotional attachment he has with the land, notably the author even tells us that 'to a peasant, land is dearer than life'. The context makes it clear that the PE is here felt as strongly connected with the emotional sphere of the PR. Nonetheless, possession is here expressed through a locative construction and not through a genitive one. One might think that this example weakens the argument according to which the choice of the genitive is based on the intimacy of the possessive relationship, while the locative is used to encode mere legal ownership. However, note that the PR here is thinking to sell the land, so if on the one hand the PE is felt as intimately connected with the PR, on the other hand it is also conceptualised as a mere legal ownership, and that could explain the choice for the locative marking on the PR.

However, these semantic explanations are not always adequate to explain the preference of a construction over the other: sometimes the choice seems to be random. Consider the example in sentence (36), in which the speaker encodes three consecutive possessive constructions. The PR is always the same and it is encoded with the first-person plural pronoun, while the PEs are three different material entities: a land in the first construction, the crop of that land in the second construction, and money in the third construction. The possession of land,

that should be felt more intimate and less alienable that the possession of the crops is encoded through a construction that marks the PR as a locative, while the possession of the land's crop which should be far more alienable and less connected with the emotional sphere of the PR is encoded through a genitive construction.[11]

(36) *utne hī   khet to   hamāre pās   bhī   haiṁ.*
just as much.M.PL field.M.PL.NOM 1PL.LOC(beside)   too   to be.3PL.PRS
utnī hī   upaj   hamārī   bhī   hai.   phir
just as much.F crop.F.SG.NOM   1PL.GEN.F   too   to be.3PL.PRS then
kyoṁ   hamāre pās   kaphan   ko   kaurī   nahīṁ   aur
why   1PL.LOC(beside)   shroud   PSP(for)   cent.SG.NOM   not   and
unke   ghar   naī   gāy
3PL.GEN.M   house[M.SG.OBL]   new.F   COW.F.SG.NOM
ātī hai
to come.3SG.PRS.F
'We own field of the same size as his, and we have crops as good as his. Then how come that we don't even have a cent to buy a shroud, while they have a new cow in their house?'

Lastly, consider the following example, in which once again the choice of the genitive construction seems not to be determined by an emotional attachment of the PR to the PE. See sentence (37):

(37) *"Mere sir meṁ jor kā dard ho rahā hai. ādhā sir esā phaṭā paṛtā hai, jaise gir jāyagā." Mehtā ne ākar kahā* […] *"Tumhāre sāth koī davā bhī to nahīṁ hai?" "Kyā maiṁ kisī marīj ko dekhne ā rahī thī, jo davā lekar caltī?"*
'"I have got a terrible headache. My head's bursting as half of it were about to drop off." Mehta walked over to her and said, "[…] Don't you have any pills with you?" "Was I supposed to be visiting a patient? Why should I have brought any pills?"'
merā   ek davāoṁ   kā   baks
1SG.GEN.M   a   medicine.F.PL.OBL GEN.M   box.M.SG.NOM
hai   vah Semrī meṁ hai
to be.3SG.PRS   it is in Semri
'I do have a box of medicine, (it is in Semri)'.

Example (37) is interesting because the reason for the use of a genitival construction here seems to be pragmatic. As the context makes clear, the PR – a doctor who is suffering from a bad headache – is asked whether she has a box of medicine with her or not. The speaker an-

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[11]   Note that the sentences in example (36) are pragmatically marked, for this reason the order of constituents is here PE-PR-V.

swers that she *owns* a box of medicines, but unluckily she does not have it with her (she left it in Semri). As we have seen in § 6.1, the locative construction with the postposition *-ke pās* is characterised by a certain degree of ambiguity, since it allows the expression of all types of possession – temporary possession, physical possession, and ownership. Here, the speaker chooses to use the *genitive construction* in order to avoid any ambiguity: she wants to emphasise that the possession she is expressing is not of the physical type. Thus, it must be noted that while grammatical tradition of Hindi has mainly highlighted the semantic implications of the use of the genitive construction, sometimes the choice of this type of structure is influenced by pragmatic factors.[12]

6.3   Predications of Belonging in Hindi

As mentioned above, one fundamental distinction holds between *ascriptions of possession* (or *have*-constructions: i.e. 'I have a new sari') and *predications of belonging* (or *belong*-constructions: i.e. 'The new sari is mine'). The difference between these two types is pragmatic and primarily depends on the information packaging of the sentence. Thus far, possessive constructions where the PR is the topical element and the PE the comment have been discussed, i.e. how Hindi encodes *ascriptions of possession* with the possessive relationship profiled from the point of view of the PR. We now turn our attention to the ways in which Hindi expresses a possessee-oriented relation.

This pragmatic distinction has been claimed to be cross-linguistically valid (Heine 1997): every language has constructions that encode possessive relationship from the inverse perspective i.e. from the point of view of the PE. However, while some languages mark the difference between *belong*-constructions and *have*-constructions by lexical and syntactic means, other languages do not clearly encode this distinction. In English, for example, the verb *have* is used for a possessor-oriented expression, while the verb *belong* and the construction *X is Y's* are used to encode a possessee-oriented expression. In contrast, Hindi does not distinguish these two types of sentences through such lexical

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12   One of the anonymous reviewers suggests that the genitive construction here is used to imply a particular connection with the personal sphere of the PR, and therefore to underline the intimate relation between the PR – a doctor – and the PE – a box of medicines (*davāoṁ kā baks*). I do not fully agree with this interpretation: even if the PR is a doctor and this could imply that she feels the PE as closer to her personal sphere, I believe that in this specific case the reason behind the use of a genitive construction instead of a locative one is to avoid any ambiguity: Dr Malti is saying that she has her medical box but at the moment it is not with her. In a non-marked context, a doctor would probably use a locative construction to encode the possession of a box of medicine and s/he would not map this relation as inalienable.

and syntactic strategies. In this language, *belong*-constructions have the following structure: the PR is marked with the genitive case and the PE is in the nominative; the verb, once again, is *honā* 'to be'. This construction can be associated with Heine's *Equation Schema* and it is summarised with the following formula: *Y is X's* (*property*) > *Y belongs to X* (Heine 1997, 65). Some examples of *predications of belonging* in Hindi are given in sentences (38) and (39):

(38) *jis*   *makān*   *meṁ*   *rahtā hūṁ,*   *vah*
     REL.ADJ.OBL   house.OBL   LOC(in)   to live.3SG.PRS.M   CRR.PRN.NOM
     ab   *merā*   *nahīṁ*   *hai*
     now   1SG.GEN.M   not   to be.3SG.PRS
     'The house I am living in now does not belong to me'.

(39) *Jhuniyā*   *ab*   *hamārī*   *ho gaī*
     Jhuniya.NOM   now   1PL.GEN.F   become.1SG.AOR.F
     'Now, Jhuniya has become ours (daughter)'.

Clearly, this construction is quite similar to the genitive construction discussed in § 6.2 and used to encode *ascriptions of possession*, but there are some fundamental differences.

1. First, while in *ascriptions of possession* the verb *honā* has an existential meaning, in *predications of belonging* it has a copular function: it only connects the PE to the PR and defines the tense and mood of the relationship. Indeed, like many other Indo-European languages, Hindi uses one verb, *honā* 'to be', for two major functions, the copular and the existential-locative.
2. Second, in predications of belonging, the PR is not endowed with any syntactic properties of subjecthood (e.g. initial position, control of reflexive pronouns and adjectives, control of coreferential deletion) as it is in *ascriptions of possession*. So notably while in *ascriptions of possession* the unmarked order of the constituents is PR-PE-V, in *predications of belonging* the unmarked order is PE-PR-V. What accounts for this is that in *ascriptions of possession*, the raising of the syntactic status of the oblique PR is a consequence of its topicality, but as previously noted, *belong*-constructions are characterised by an inverse informational structure, where the PE is the topic element. Notice that as a consequence of the topicality of the PE, in *belong*-constructions the PE is always definite.
3. Third, in belong constructions the PE is *always* definite and known, while *ascriptions of possession* can encode also possessive constructions in which the PE is indefinite and unknown.

According to some scholars (Taylor 1989; Heine 1997), there is a strong correlation between *predications of belonging* and the concept of *ownership*: that is, *predications of belonging* do not share the same wide semantic extension that *ascriptions of possession* do, and they disallow the expression of such notions as temporary possession and physical possession. From the analysis of the corpus considered here, this correlation does appear to hold in part: when the construction involves concrete PEs, generally the notion encoded is that of ownership. However, evidence from Hindi tells us that this construction can also express other notions.

From the analysis of the semantic features of PR and PE of Hindi constructions found in the corpus, it emerges that while the PR is always [+HUMAN], the PE can be [±HUMAN], [±ANIMATE] or [±CONCRETE]: so, this construction can encode other expressions beside ownership. In particular, of the 23 occurrences of this construction in the corpus, a third encode kinship or social relationships (see example (39)), only two instances encode abstract possession (example (40)), and all the other instances are expressions of ownership of concrete entities (like *house*, *bank*, *assets*, as in sentence (38) above) and of animals (sentence (41)).

(40) *kānūn   aur   nyāy   uskā   hai,*
      law.M.SG.NOM   and   justice.M.SG.NOM   CRR.PRN.GEN.M   to be.3SG.PRS
      jiske pās   paisā   hai
      REL.PRN.LOC(beside) money.SG.NOM   to be.3SG.PRS
      'Law and justice belong to the one who has money'.

(41) *gāy   merī   hogī*
      COW.F.SG.NOM   1SG.GEN.F   to be.3SG.F.FUT
      'The cow will be mine'.

6.4   Genitive Constructions and the Expression of Inalienability

Hindi grammars (Hook 1979; Kachru 2006; Montaut 2004a; Milanetti, Gupta 2008) systematically associate the genitive construction with the notion of inalienability: this pattern is used to express intimate and inherent relationships, like kinship and body-part relationships. The locative construction, on the other hand, bears no such meaning. Examples for the encoding of kinship relationships and body-part relationships follow in (42) and (43):

(42) *unkī   tīn   laṛkiyāṁ   thīṁ*
      3PL.GEN.F   three   daughters.F.PL.NOM   to be.3PL.PST.F
      'He had three daughters'.

(43) *us*   *laṛkī*   *kī*   *nīlī*   *ankheṁ*   *haiṁ*
      that.OBL   girl.F.SG.OBL   GEN.F   blue.F   eyes.F.PL.NOM   to be.3PL.PRS
      'That girl has blue eyes'.

The terms *alienable* and *inalienable* (and their synonymic alternatives *inherent* vs. *established*; *separable* vs. *inseparable*) appear very frequently in the literature on possession. The term 'inalienability' indicates that the relationship between the two *relata* is conceived as inherent or indissoluble, like, for example, the relationship between family members and the relation between a body part and its possessor. The contents of the class of inalienable entities vary from culture to culture. However, Stassen (2009, 17) points out that when a language has a unique encoding for inalienability, "this encoding will almost always cover at least the relation between a 'possessor' and his or her body parts, and/or the relation between a 'possessor' and the members of his or her kinship circle", thus suggesting that these relationships are generally considered prototypical examples of inalienability. The fact that these two types of relationship seem to form the core of inalienable possession can be explained by the fact that body parts and family members are relational entities in the real world. Further extensions of inalienable encoding may then vary from culture to culture; in Hindi, for example, not only are blood-kinship relations seen as inalienable, but also intimate social relationships such as those with a friend or a spouse are usually encoded with the genitive construction. Professional relationships, in contrast, are not viewed as inalienable and are generally encoded with locative constructions (see examples (44) and (45), § 6.5).

Over the entire set of 21 sentences with genitive constructions found in the corpus, 15 were identified as expressions of inalienability and only six sentences conveyed the meaning of ownership. Moreover, it must be noted that no other syntactic schema can express inalienable relationships in Hindi. Considering this, it appears clear that genitive constructions have the unique ability to codify this notion; in this regard, Hindi aligns with the typological data presented by Heine (1997, 67): "in a number of languages, the *Genitive Schema* provides the primary means of expressing inalienable possession".

Recall from § 6.2 that Hindi genitive postposition forms an adjectival structure: the genitival postposition -*kā* (/-*ke*/-*kī*) is attached to the PR in the oblique case and agrees in gender, number and case with the PE, as exemplified in the examples (28a)-(28e). It is significant that the genitive construction is used to encode only inalienable possession, while alienable possession in Hindi is typically expressed through locative construction and does not require agreement. Discussing the use of adjectival constructions for the encoding of inalienability in Sanskrit, Viti (2004) points out that the category of adjective is generally

used to express inherent and permanent properties. Moreover, she remarks that the adjective is a relational category both from a syntactic point of view – an adjective cannot occur without a head-noun – and from a semantic point of view – the value of an adjective depends on the noun it modifies. The same can be said about inalienable relationships: inalienable relationships are seen as inherent and permanent, and the inalienable PE is prototypically a relational entity (a family member or a body-part). In short, the fact that the genitive construction uses a postposition that agrees in gender and number with the PE seems to be emblematic of the type of relationship that exists between the two *relata*. We can thus conclude that the Hindi genitival construction is iconic: the relational nature of inalienability is formally encoded through the use of the relational category of adjectives.

Given the fact that the genitive construction is specialised for the encoding of inalienability, and given the high iconicity of Hindi (§ 5), one might wonder why this construction allows the expression of non-inherent and non-inalienable relationships as ownership. However, recall from § 6.2 that, when expressing ownership, the genitive construction is generally associated with a more intimate possessive relationship. Moreover, as Pompeo (2010, 42) points out, in some contexts the notion of *ownership* is similar to that of inalienable possession in many respects: the relationship between the *relata* is particularly strong and it exists even without spatial proximity. Additionally, both relationships require an exclusive association between the PR and the PE. Thus, in Hindi, the use of the genitive construction to express *ownership* mirrors the similarity between this possessive notion and inalienable relationships. Once again, the choice of the syntactic pattern is dependent on the semantic properties of the event.

6.5 Other Uses of the Locative and Genitive Constructions

The constructions analysed in the previous paragraphs can also serve other semantic purposes. As in many other languages, Hindi possessive constructions can be used to encode non-possessive meanings, owing to the mental processes of metaphoric or metonymic extension. In the next paragraph, semantic extensions of the locative construction will be considered first and afterwards the semantics of the genitive construction.

The locative construction can be used to express professional relationships, as in example (44), 'We have servants'. Notice that if the relationship is not of a professional type, but a more general social relationship (as in 'I also have a friend', in example (45)) the use of the locative construction is disallowed, and the genitive construction is employed instead. It is worth noting that once again, the parameters that influence the choice between the genitive and the locative

constructions are the emotional attachment and the intimacy of the relationship.

(44) *hamāre pās* *naukar-cākar* *haiṁ*
1PL.LOC(beside) servant.M.PL.NOM to be.3PL.PRS
'We have servants'.

(45) *merā* *bhī* *koī* *hitū* *hai*
1SG.GEN.M too INDF.ADJ.DIR friend.M.SG.NOM to be.3SG.PRS
'I also have a friend'.

Furthermore, the locative construction can sometimes be used to express some metaphorical possessive notions. Specifically, it is allowed in expressing the possession of abstract entities such as *answer* in example (46) or *time* in example (47); notably, however, these uses are conventionalised and do not constitute systematic phenomena. They probably derive from metaphorical conceptualisations of abstract entities as concrete and material ones. For example, according to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), the metaphor TIME IS MONEYoccurs quite frequently across cultures and languages: it is present in English, in Italian and also in Hindi.

(46) *dhaniyā* *ke pās* *javāb* *taiyār* *thā*
dhaniyā LOC(beside) answer.M.SG.NOM ready to be.3SG.PST.M
'Dhaniya had a ready answer'.

(47) *unke pās* *lagan* *thī* *aur*
3PL.LOC(beside) passion.F.SG.NOM to be.3SG.PST.F and
samay *thā*
time.M.SG.NOM to be.3SG.PST.M
'He had passion and time'.

The genitive construction is also systematically used to encode non-core possessive notions. In particular, it is frequently used to encode relationships in which one of the two relata is an abstract entity, as in the example (48):

(48) *gharvāloṁ* *ke sāth* *uskā* *bhī* *kuch*
family.M.PL.OBL PSP(with) 3SG.GEN.M also some
kartavya *hai*
responsibility.M.SG.NOM to be.3SG.PRS
'He also has some responsibilities towards his family'.

Moreover, genitive constructions are also frequently used to encode events belonging to the domains of cognition and volition, as exemplified by sentences (49) and (50). Just as in the case of the extension of the semantics of locative constructions, a metaphorical explanation can also apply in the case of genitive constructions. The experiential cognitive domain is, cross-linguistically, intimately connected with the domain of possession; in a large number of world languages, an Experiencer can be encoded as a Possessor in a possessive construction. When this happens, the following metaphor is set in motion: EXPERIENCERS ARE POSSESSORS OF EXERIENCES AND EXERIENCES ARE THINGS POSSESSED (Luraghi 2014). This metaphor occurs, for example, in English, in Greek (Benvenuto 2014; Benvenuto, Pompeo 2017; Luraghi 2020), in Italian and in Latin (Fedriani 2014) among many other languages. Note that the extension of the functionality of the genitive construction to the expression of experience is far more systematic than the extension of locative constructions for metaphorical uses.

(49) *merā* *is* *vyavasthā* *par* *viśvās* *nahīṁ*
1SG.GEN.M this.OBL system.OBL on faith.M.SG.NOM not
hai
to be.3SG.PRS
'I have no faith in this system'.

(50) *unkī* *yah* *icchā* *hai* *ki*
3PL.GEN.F this.DIR desire.F.SG.NOM to be.3SG.PRS that
'They want that… (Lit. Theirs is the desire that… / They have the desire that…)'.

7 Other Constructions and the Notion of Abstract Possession

In the above exposition of Hindi possessive constructions, an analysis of dative construction and inessive-locative construction has been put aside. As mentioned in § 6, these two constructions are used to encode only the notion of abstract possession, and they disallow the encoding of prototypical possession. In some Hindi grammars (Hook 1979; Kachru 2006), these two sentence-types are classified as possessive constructions; however, it may be argued that they should not be considered as truly possessive, since they are prototypically used to express non-possessive situations. A brief discussion of these two patterns follows.

7.1 The Inessive Construction

In inessive constructions, the argument in the initial position is marked in the oblique case followed by the postposition *meṁ* 'in', while the second argument appears in the nominative case. The predicate is once again the verb *honā* 'to be' with an existential function. This construction is sometimes considered to be specialised for the encoding of 'possession of qualities'. See the example in sentence (51).

(51) *unkī*   *patnī*   *meṁ*   *kyoṁ* *vahī*   *ātmābhimān*
      3PL.GEN.F   wife.F   LOC(in)   why   that same   self-confidence.SG.NOM
      nahīṁ   *hai*
      not   to be.3SG.PRS
      'Why doesn't his wife have that same self-confidence?' [Lit. 'Why in his wife there is not that same self-confidence?'].

The inessive construction can be also used to encode what Heine (1997, 35) defines "inanimate inalienable possession"; see the example in (52):

(52) *us*   *ghar*   *meṁ*   *cār*   *kamre*   *haiṁ*
      that.OBL   house.OBL   LOC(in)   four   room.M.PL.NOM   to be.3PL.PRS
      'That house has four rooms' [Lit. 'In that house, there are four rooms'].

An argument for the inessive construction not being included in the classification of Hindi possessive constructions can be made: this pattern, indeed, is not used to express prototypical possessive notions as defined in this paper (§ 4). The inessive construction in (52), for example, expresses a part-whole relationship rather than a possessive one. In many languages, like English, part-whole (or meronymic) relationships can be encoded through the constructions conventionalised for the expression of possession (as in the sentence 'That house has four rooms'); in these languages, these sentences express 'inanimate inalienable possession'. However, in such cases, we are not dealing with possessive relationships but rather with relational situations of a different type that are being conceptualised through possession. As Stassen points out, inanimate possession is to be "consider[ed] a metaphorical extension of possession, in the same way that the notion of possession can be extended into the domain of aspect or modality" (2009, 17).

Remarkably, the metaphorical extension of possessive constructions to part-whole relationships also takes places in Hindi: the sentence in (52) can also be encoded through a genitive construction, as exemplified in (53).

(53) *us*   *ghar*   *ke*   *cār* *kamre*   *haiṁ*
      that. OBL   house.OBL   GEN.M.PL   four room.M.PL.NOM   to be.3PL.PRS
      'That house has four rooms' [Lit. 'Of that house, there are four rooms'].

The genitive construction in (53) can be interpreted as expression of "inanimate inalienable possession": it expresses a meronymic relationship metaphorically conceptualised as possession. Since the semantics of the genitive construction is more relational than possessive (§ 6.4), it is not surprising that this pattern allows the encoding of both possessive relationships and meronymic relationships. In contrast, the same extension is disallowed by the locative-adessive construction with the postposition *-ke pās*, which is possessive (and not relational) in its prototypical use.

7.2   The Dative Construction

In Hindi grammars, dative constructions are sometimes numbered among possessive notions and are said to be specialised for the encoding of 'abstract possession'. In this type of sentence, the most salient argument is marked with the dative, a case that in Hindi is prototypically associated with the Experiencer/Beneficiary, not with the Possessor. The second argument is in the nominative and agrees with the existential verb *honā*. Some examples are given below:

(54) *unheṁ*   *kuch*   *bolne-kā*   *adhikār*   *hai*
      3PL.DAT   something   say.INF.OBL-GEN.M   right.M.SG.NOM   to be.3SG.PRS
      'They have the right to say something'.

(55) *mujhe*   *sir-dard*   *hai*
      1SG.DAT   headache.SG.NOM   to be.3SG.PRS
      'I have a headache'.

Once again, it is apparent that these constructions cannot really be considered possessive: what emerges from examples (54)-(55) is not an expression of possessive events but rather of other types of situations. Example (54) illustrates a beneficiary event: the first argument should not be seen as a Possessor of an abstract entity, but instead as the Beneficiary of a situation; while in (55), the dative construction expresses a body sensation: the argument in the dative is an Experiencer, not a Possessor.

From a typological perspective, the notion of 'abstract possession' is quite problematic in itself: it is very far from the possessive prototype, as it lacks both control and spatial proximity, and whether it can

even be considered as a possessive notion is debatable (Barðdal, Danesi 2018). In SAE languages, like Italian and English, it makes sense to assume the existence of such a notion, since the encoding strategy for the core possessive meaning is also used to express relation with abstract relata (as in example (6) 'That woman has courage'). In languages like English, then, the relation with an abstract entity, like the body sensation in the sentence 'I have a splitting headache', is metaphorically interpreted as possession. Note that the notion of abstract possession is not completely irrelevant in Hindi: as noted in § 6.5, while dealing with other uses of locative and genitive constructions, these patterns can encode relationships in which the first participant is [+HUMAN] and the second participant is [-CONCRETE]. In particular, the genitive construction is systematically used for the expression of the experiential domains of cognition and volition which in Hindi can be metaphorically conceptualised through possessive relationships. In these cases, it makes sense to talk about *abstract possession*, since the constructions under consideration are prototypically associated with the encoding of core possessive notions and are metaphorically extended to the expression of other situations. This explanation however does not work for a possessive interpretation of the Hindi dative construction or the Hindi inessive construction: as noted, the dative postposition *-ko* is prototypically associated with the Beneficiary or the Experiencer of an event, while the locative postposition *meṁ* is prototypically associated with inessive-locative meaning.

8 Conclusion

This paper has analysed the expression of core possessive notions in Hindi, demonstrating that two syntactic patterns can encode the notion of ownership, namely, the locative construction with the postposition *-ke pās*, and the genitive construction. The locative construction is clearly the more conventional. Locative marking on the PR is used to express the whole domain of alienable possession: it can encode the notion of ownership, and it is also the only type of sentence that allows the expression of temporary or physical possession. Moreover, it is highly specific in its semantics: except for the expression of professional relationships, it is rarely used for the encoding of other situations.
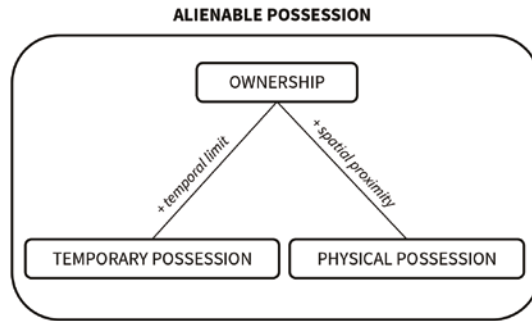
ALIENABLE POSSESSION

OWNERSHIP

+ temporal limit

+ spatial proximity

TEMPORARY POSSESSION

PHYSICAL POSSESSION

Figure 1 Semantic reconstruction of Hindi locative (possessive) construction

The genitive construction, instead, has vaguer semantics: its basic meaning is relational, not possessive. This construction is the canonical vehicle for expressing inalienable relationships, but it can also be used to encode ownership when the semantics of the event shows some specific relational properties, i.e. when there is a strong connection between the PE and the personal sphere of the PR. This explains why only the prototypical notion of ownership allows the use of genitive marking on the PR: temporary and physical possession are normally not characterised by an intimate relationship between the two entities. Additionally, given its semantic vagueness, the genitive construction allows more functional extension. It can also be used metaphorically to encode possession of abstract entities and possession of psychological states.
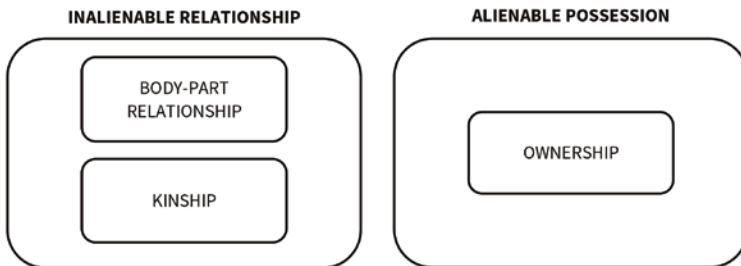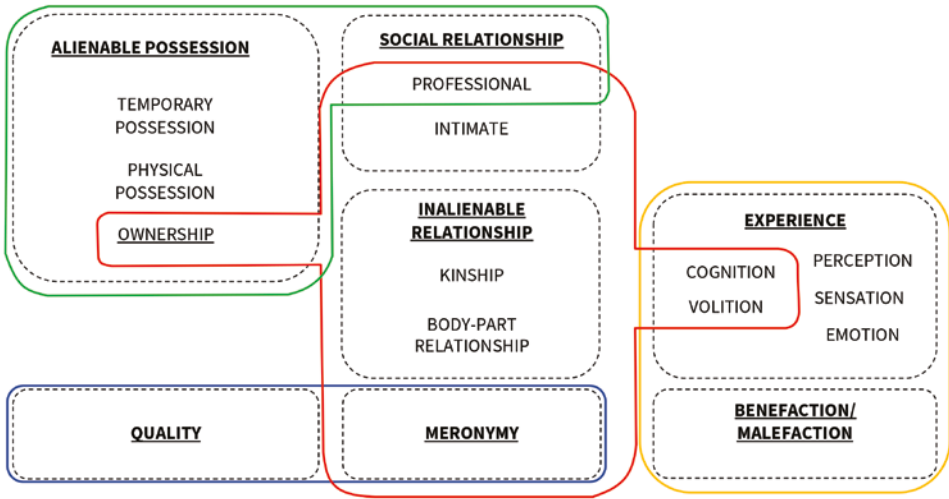
INALIENABLE RELATIONSHIP

ALIENABLE POSSESSION

BODY-PART
RELATIONSHIP

KINSHIP

OWNERSHIP

Figure 2 Semantic reconstruction of Hindi genitive possessive construction

The results of this investigation are depicted in the overall semantic map of Hindi possessive constructions shown in **[fig. 3]**.

List of abbreviations

1	First person
2	Second person
3	Third person
ACC	Accusative
ADJ	Adjective
AOR	Aorist
COM	Comitative
CRR	Correlative
CVB	Converb
DAT	Dative
DIR	Direct
EMPH	Emphatic
ERG	Ergative
F	Feminine
FUT	Future
GEN	Genitive
INDF	Indefinite
INF	Infinitive
INS	Instrumental
LOC	Locative

M	Masculine
NOM	Nominative
OBL	Oblique
PE	Possessee
PL	Plural
PR	Possessor
PRF	Perfect
PRN	Pronoun
PRS	Present
PSP	Postposition
PST	Past
REFL	Reflexive
REL	Relative
SG	Singular
SBJV	Subjunctive
V	Verb

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