Towards a Morphosyntactic Analysis of Verbs of Possession in Argobba

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Abstract: The paper aims at describing and analyzing the morphosyntactic structures of the verbs of possession in Argobba. The verbs do not follow the stem formation mechanisms employed in the prototypical verbs of the language. It also exhibits syntactic deviation in selecting non-referential subject in structures headed by the verbal word with 3MS subject agreement and a referential subject NP otherwise. Unlike the classical verbs of the language, dislocation of the subject and the object is obligatory in structures headed by the possessive verbal word with non-3MS subject agreement. It is argued that the GB approach hardly accounts for the structure of the possessive predicates. The Head- Driven Phrase Structure Grammar (HPSG) approach however can explain it better.

Introduction

This paper aims at describing and analyzing the morphological and syntactic properties of the verbs of possession in Argobba, a Semitic language of Ethiopia. A prototypical constituent order of Argobba sentences is S(ubject) – O(bject) – V(erb) (SOV). The verbs of possession show deviation from the prototypical verbs of the language in both morphology and syntax. So as to show the deviation clearly, the basic morphological and syntactic properties of Argobba verbs are presented, as a background, in section 2. In section 3, empirical facts about the morphology and syntax of the verbs of possession are addressed. The verbs of possession resemble the verbs of existence in the stem forms and subject inflections. The difference between the two verbs is identified and a proposal about their relation is forwarded in section 4. In section 5, I analyze syntactic structures headed by the verbs of possession in both GB and HPSG approaches and stick to the one that explains the issue better. Finally, in section 6, the discussion will be summed up with concluding remarks.

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Background Information

Argobba, as a Semitic language, is characterized by deriving verbal stems from consonantal roots. The root consists of consonants, commonly called *radicals*, basically ranging from two to four. Stem formative vowels are inserted between the consonants. Different arrangements of consonants and vowels are used to derive different verbal stem forms like perfective, imperfective, gerundive, etc. The predominant patterns of derivation for perfective, imperfective and gerundive verb forms are exemplified in (1) below.

(1)

Gloss	Root	Perfective	Imperfective	Gerundive
fetch	k'-d- ħ	k'əddəħ-	(-) kədħ-	k'ədəħ-
order	ʔ-m-r	ʔemmər-	(-)ʔemmɨr-	ʔammɨrr-
attest	m-s-k-r	məsakkər-	(-)məsakkɨr-	məskɨrr-

The basic verbal stem formation is thus non-concatenative. The verbal stems like causative and passive are derived by concatenative means. That is, by affixing verb formative morphemes to the already non-concatenatively derived verbal stems. Causative verbs, for instance, are derived by the causative morphemes *a-* and *as-* attached to verbal stems.

The verb derivation is not the derivation of the verb *word,* but the verb stem. To surface as a *verbal word,* the verbal stems obligatorily require subject pronoun affixes. The subject pronoun affixes vary along with the verb stem forms they are attached to. The 3rd person masculine singular (3MS) subject, for instance, is indicated with different pronoun affixes attached to different verbal stems derived from the root l-w-s 'wear' as exemplified in (2).

(2) a. ləwwəs-ø 'He wore'
wear.PF-3MSs
b. (yɨ-)ləws-əl 'He wears/will wear.'
3MSs-wear-AUX.PRES
c. ləwɨss-o-həl 'He has worn.'
wear.GER-3MSs-AUX.PRES

As can be observed from the examples in (2), the 3MS subject is referred by zero morpheme (2a), *yɨ-* (2b) and *–o* (2c) in perfective, imperfective and gerundive verbal stems respectively. The morpheme *–(h)əl* is non-past auxiliary in the language.

The subject pronoun affixes to be attached to different forms of verbal stems of the language are summarized as follows.

(3)

		Perfective	Imperfective	Gerundive	Jussive
Singular	1	-eħu	(l-)	-e	l -
	2 M	-ex	(t-)	-əx	-
	F	-eš	(t-)	-əš	-
	3 M	ø	(y-)	-o	y -
	F	-əčč	(t-)	-a	t -
Plural	1	-ena	ɨnn-	-ənna	ɨnn -
	2	-eħum	(t-) -u	-əħum	-
	3	-əy	(y-) -u	-əm	y- -u

Besides the subject pronoun affixes, Argobba transitive verbs bear object pronoun suffixes to identify definite object NPs. Unlike the subject pronoun affixes, the object pronouns are suffixes and optional. In structures headed by ditransitive verbs,

the object pronoun suffixes on the verb refer to an indirect object rather than to a direct object.
The object pronoun suffixes that are attached to the different verbal forms are summarized below.

(4) OBL		Perfective	Imperfective	Gerundive	with
Singular	1	-əňň	-əňň	-əňň	-əyye
	2 M	-əx	-əx	-əkk	-əx
	F	-əš/-əčč	-əš	-əčč	-əš
	3 M	- əy[1]	-əbb	-əyy	-o
	F	-əya	-əbba	-əyya	-a
Plural	1	-əna	-əna	-ənna	-əna
	2	-əħum	-əħum	-əkkum	-əħum
	3	-əyem	-əbbem	-əyyem	-em

The fact that the subject and the object pronoun affixes identify the subject and the object NP constituents, the identified NPs may not appear in a sentence structure.

[1] Notice that *-əy* is homophonous to the 3PL subject pronoun suffix. As a result, some verb forms could be ambiguous. For instance, *gərrəfəy* has the readings ‘they swept’ or ‘He swept him.’

(5) a. (an) mət'ť -eħu 'I came.'
I come.PF-1Ss
b. fat'uma (ɨwwat –on) səddəw-əčč-əy
Fatuma he- ACC insult.PF-3FSs-3MSo
'Fatuma insulted him.'
c. (ɨyyat) (ɨwwat-on) səddəw-əčč-əy
she he-ACC insult.PF-3FSs-3MSo
'She insulted him.'
d. musa (li-yyat) gɨziʔ haw -ø – əya
Musa to-she money give.PF-3MSs-3FSo
'Musa gave her money.'

In so far as the pronoun affixes on the verb identify the constituents in the parenthesis in (5), the NPs can be phonetically null. This makes Argobba a pro-dropping language. It should however be noted that the identifying affixes should agree with the identified NPs in number, person and gender. The agreement between the identifying affix and the identified NP is indicated by co-indexation as in the following examples.

(6) a. ɨyyat$_i$ hara-čč-ɨn$_j$ šerrəħ-ačč$_i$ -əy$_j$
she sheep-DEF.M-ACC buy.PF-3FSs-3MSo
'She bought the he-sheep.'
b. fat'uma$_i$ li- yyat$_j$ gɨziʔ haw - əčč$_i$ -əya$_j$
Fatuma to- she money give.PF-3FSs-3FSo
'Fatuma gave money to her.'

It is, however, worth mentioning that in some structures like raising constructions, the identified NP by the pronoun affix on the verb might not be phonetically realized on the subject slot as in (7).

(7) [[fat'uma k'aš -əčč] yɨ- məss - əl]
Fatuma angry.IMPF-3FSs 3MSs-seem.IMPF-AUX.PRES
'It seems that Fatuma is angry.'

In (7), *fat'uma* is the subject of the complement clause which is identified by the subject pronoun suffix *-əčč* on the embedded verb. The subject of the matrix clause is identified by the subject pronoun prefix *yɨ-* which refers to the 3MS subject. Thus, the 3MS subject pronoun *ɨwwat* 'he' or an NP that has the 3MS AGR value is supposed to fill the subject slot. Nevertheless, if the subject slot is filled by the identified NP, the structure will be ill-formed. This tells us that the language allows null subject sentences. The structure in (7) might have been well-formed if the subject slot were filled by a pleonastic pronoun. As the language has no pleonastic pronoun, equivalent to the English *it* and *there,* the subject slot in (7) is empty. It should however be noted that the verbs in such structures are characterized by having the 3MS subject pronoun affix. This in turn leads us to claim that the 3MS subject pronoun affix refers to both pleonastic and non-pleonastic subject pronouns in the language.

One final point to be made with respect to the object pronoun suffix is that the pronoun suffix may identify the object of a preposition in a PP that has an adverbial function rather than identifying the direct or indirect object. It should however be noted that in such cases, the pronoun suffix follows an oblique infix as illustrated in (8) below.

(8) k'əməra$_i$ bə- gɨzi?-ɨčči$_j$ səro šerrəħ-əčč-ɨw – o$_j$
Kemera with- money-DEF.M clothes buy.PF-3FSs-OBL-3MSo
'Kemera bought a dress with the money.'

With this short background information about the morphological and syntactic properties of Argobba verbs, we pass to the issue we intend to address in this paper.

Empirical Observation

Morphology

The verbs of possession are different for present, past and future that are derived from different roots (or bases). That is why I used the term 'the verbs of possession' rather than considering them as a single possessive verb. In this regard, the verbs deviate from the regular derivation patterns employed for the derivation of past and non-past verb forms in the language. The verb stems are *hɨll-*, *ɨmber-* and *nəwr-* for present, past and future respectively. Consider the examples in (9) below.

(9) a. gɨziʔ hɨll -ø- əňň
money has-3MSs-1So
'I have money.'
b. gɨziʔ ɨmbər- ø-əňň
money had- 3MSs-1So
'I had money.'
c. gɨziʔ (yɨ)- nəwr -əňň-əl
money 3MSs-has-1So-AUX.PRES
'I will have money.'

Unlike the prototypical verbs of the language, the verbal heads in (9) are not derived from the same consonantal root as predicted from the derivation of the verbs of the language. There is no even evidence that the stem forms *hɨll-* and *ɨmbər-* are derived from consonantal roots. In this regard, it seems that such derivational phenomenon is observed in other Ethio-Semitic languages like Tigrinya (Kogan 1997), Harari (Wagner 1997) and Silti (Gutt 1997). Amharic and Kistanyna, for instance, have the following forms.

(10)

	Present	Past	Future
Amharic	all-	nəbbər-	-nor-
Kistanyna	yɨn-	nəbbər-	-nor-

As can be observed from the examples in (9), the possessive verbs bear the object pronoun affixes. The present verbal stem *hɨll-* and the past stem *ɨmbər-* take the phonetically null 3MS subject agreement that can be observed in the perfective verb forms in the other regular verbs. As can be learnt from the list in (4), the phonetically realized affixes are object pronoun suffixes. Besides their form, their distribution is another evidence for their being the object agreement affixes. In other words, the object pronoun suffixes cannot be attached to a verbal stem but to a verbal word. The interesting point is that the present verbal stem *hɨll-* has the morphological property of the perfective verbs which are associated to past tense. With regard to the object pronoun suffix, unlike the other transitive verbs, in the verb of possession, the object pronouns are not optional. In connection with this, it is crucial to make a point that the object suffix occurs immediately following the subject pronoun suffix. This implies that the NP identified by the object pronoun suffix does not have adverbial function or the referred NP is not an adjunct. This is contrary to the predicate in (8) with OBL. That is, in (8), the suffix follows the OBL, but the subject agreement suffix in (9).

Coming back to the subject pronoun affixes, as we saw earlier, zero morpheme (9a&b) and *yɨ-* (9c) identify the 3MS subject. The crucial point is that the verbs can bear other subject pronoun affixes without affecting the meaning. This leads us to the syntactic property of the possessive predicate, which is the subject of the next subsection.

Syntax

Like its morphological structure, the syntactic structure of the verbs of possession is also different from the basic syntactic structure of the other verbs. Consider the examples in (11).

(11) a. k'əməra lam hɨll-ø-əya
Kemera cow has-3MSs-3FSo
'Kemera has a cow.'
b. an xɨt hɨll-ø-əňň
I sister has-3MSs-1So
'I have a sister.'
c. musa nɨšča lɨj hɨll-ø-əy
Musa female child has-3MSs-3MSo
'Musa has a daughter.'

In these examples, neither of the NPs in the respective sentences could be a subject of the respective sentences. Let us focus on (11a), as a representative structure, and see the case in detail. In (11a) neither *k'əməra* 'a name of a woman' nor *lam* 'cow' can qualify to be a subject of the sentence because as the verb form identifies a 3MS subject, *k'əməra* and *lam*, which are 3FS, do not agree with the verb. On the other hand, the object pronoun suffix *-əya* on the verb identifies 3FS object NP. In this case, both *k'əməra* and *lam* qualify to be an object. To be able to know which one of them is the object, let us substitute *k'əməra* by *nɨšča-čč* 'the women' (12a) and *lam* by *lam-ačč* 'the cows' (12b) and see which one of the substitutions affects the object pronoun suffix *-əya* on the verbal head.

(12) a. nɨšča- čč lam hɨll-ø-əyem
woman-PL cow has-3MSs-3PLo
'The women have a cow.'
b. k'əməra lam-ačč hɨll-ø-əya
Kemera cow-PL has-3MSs-3FSo
'Kemera has cows.'

As can be learned from the structures in (12), the object suffix in (11a) is affected by the substitution of *k'əməra* by *nɨšča-čč*. This tells us that *k'əməra* is the object identified by *-əya* in (11a). There are two basic questions to be raised here. First, we argued that *lam* is not a subject and the substitution in (12) also asserts that it is not the object NP identified by *-əya*, so what is it? Second, in so far as both *k'əməra* and *lam* could not qualify to be a subject, what is the subject of the sentence? With regard to the first question, *lam* is not a subject, but a possessed object NP. As for *k'əməra*, we said that it is identified by the object pronoun suffix on the verb. The problem here is to identify whose object *k'əməra* could be in the sentence. We can get clue from its semantics. That is, semantically *k'əməra* is a benefactive or recipient NP. Such semantic relation is expressed by PP headed by *lə-* in the language. In this line of argument, it seems plausible to consider *k'əməra* as a complement of a phonetically unrealized preposition. This assumption is substantiated by structures where the preposition or adposition is optional without affecting the meaning. For instance, the structure in (13a) is expressed as in (13b) without changing the meaning.

(13) a. k'əməra [bə- kəmise ama] xəyd-əčč
Kemera to-Kemissie to go.PF-3FSs
'Kemera went to Kemissie.'
b. k'əməra [kəmise] xəyd-əčč
Kemera Kemissie go.PF-3FSs
'Kemera went to Kemissie.'

The other fact that may support this claim is that as we saw in structures headed by ditransitive verbs, the object suffix on the verb refers to an indirect object NP in a PP rather than to a direct object NP. Likewise, the object pronoun suffix in (11a) does not refer to the possessed NP *lam*, but to the possessor NP *k'əməra* which is considered as the object of a phonetically unrealized preposition. If our assumption

is correct, the verb of possession, hɨll in (11) can have the underlying argument structure (ARG-ST) like in (14).

(14) hɨll $\langle\langle\ \rangle, PP[l\text{ə}], NP\rangle$

Nevertheless, this assumption, with a PP headed by a phonetically unrealized preposition, is not welcomed by a surface oriented theory, HPSG. Following the theory, the ARG-ST for hɨll is $\langle\langle\ \rangle, NP, NP\rangle$ rather than the one in (14).

The other related issue worth mentioning in structures headed by the verb of possession is the use of referential subject for the same meaning expressed with a null subject. Thus, the structure in (11) can have the corresponding structure in (15).

(15) a. k'əməra lam hɨll-əčč - əya
Zeyneba cow has-3FSs-3FSo
'Kemera has a cow.'
b. an xɨt hɨll-əčč - əňň
I sister has-3FS-1Ss
'I have a sister. '
c. musa nɨšča lɨj hɨll-əčč - əy
Musa female child has-3FSs-3MSo
' Musa has a daughter.'

In (15), the verbal heads have phonetically realized subject pronoun suffixes which are associated with phonetically realized subject NPs. In (15a), which corresponds to (11a), the verb stem *hɨll-* has two pronoun suffixes, *-əčč* and *-əya* which refer to the 3FS subject and the 3FS object respectively. The two NP constituents, *k'əməra* and *lam* match to the subject pronoun suffix *-əčč* as well as to the object pronoun suffix *-əya*. Thus, as both the non-head NPs qualify the 3FS subject, to identify the subject of the sentence, let us use the substitution test again and see the affected pronoun suffix by the substitution. We can substitute each of the NPs by plural nominals as (16).

(16) a. niššča - čč lam hɨll -əčč - əyem
woman-Pl cow has-3FSs-3PLo
'The women have a cow.'
b. k'əməra lam-ačč hɨll -əy - əya
Zeyneba cow -PL has-3PLs-3FSo
'Kemera has cows.'

In (16a), *k'əməra* is substituted by *niš*ča-čč 'the women' and what is affected by the substitution is the object pronoun suffix. In (16b), *lam* is substituted by *lam-a*čč 'the cows' and the subject pronoun suffix is affected. Based on this, we can claim that the subject in (15a) is *lam* not *k'əməra.* Likewise, in (15b) and (c) the subject pronoun suffix *-əčč* refers to *xɨt* and *nɨšča lɨj* respectively. Now, there are at least two questions to be considered. First, how do we account for the relation between the structures in (11), with a null subject, and the ones in (15), with referential subjects, in so far as they have the same meaning? Secondly, how do we account the realization of *lam, xɨt* and *nɨšča lɨj* as a subject in (15), which are not in (11)? The answer to these questions may vary depending on the theoretical framework set for the analysis. We will take up the issue in section (5).

Verbs of Possession and Existence

Now let us raise another issue about the resemblance of the verb of possession to the verb of existence. The verb of possession and the verb of existence are identical in their stem. Compare the verb stems in (9) with the ones in (17) below.

(17) a. tə-bet hɨll -eħu
in-house exist-1Ss
'I am at home.'
b. tə-bet ɨmbər -eħu
in-house exist.PF-1Ss
'I was at home.'
c. tə-bet nəwr-ɨll-eħu
in-house exist.IMPF-AUX-1Ss
'I will be at home.'

Both the verbs of possession and existence use the stems *hɨll-*, *ɨmbər-* and *nəwr-* for present, past and future. In both cases, there is no clue that shows how the present and the past stem forms are derived. The future form *nəwr-*, however is derived from the consonantal root n-w-r 'live, exist'.

In addition to this, the two verbs have close basic semantic relation. That is, the structures headed by the verb of possession could be literary interpreted as 'there exist X for Y.' It seems that the meaning of possession is derived from the meaning of existence in historical development. Thus, both the formal and the semantic relation suggest that the two verbs were one and the same verbs. Along with this line of assumption, in a related language, Amharic, Baye (1994) treats the possessive verb *all-* as an existential predicate that designates the existence of something. He has the example in (18) to make his point vivid.

(18) aster əhət all-ä-at
A. sister exist-3sms-3sfo
Lit. 'there exists a sister for Aster.'/ 'Aster has a sister.' (Baye 1994:1138))

However, although, the verbs have such resemblance in the above mentioned properties, at present, it is hardly possible to consider them as *existential verb* altogether. The verbs of possession and the verbs of existence exhibit a difference in their inflection. That is, the verb of possession inflects for both subject and object,

but the verbs of existence do only for subject. Thus, the verbs of possession and the verbs of existence exhibit the morphosyntactic properties of transitive and intransitive verbs respectively. In their syntactic structure, the two verbs show significant difference. In the predicate of possession, the 3MS subject pronoun affix does not refer to referential NP, but it does in the verb of existence predicate as illustrated in (19) below.

(19) a. musa tə- bet hɨll -ø
Musa in- house exist.PRES-3MSs
'Musa is at home.'
b. ɨwwat tə- bet ɨmbər-ø
he in- house exist.PAS-3MSs
'He was at home.'

Notice that in (19a) and (b), the subject NPs are *Musa* and *ɨwwat*, which agree with the 3MS subject pronoun suffix.

Furthermore, in possessive predicates bearing non-3MS subject pronoun affixes, dislocation of subject and object NPs is obligatory, which is not the case in the verb of existence. Likewise, the verb of existence requires adverbial PP complement which appears in its canonical position which is not the case in the verb of possession.

Therefore, the verbs of existence and the verbs of possession have the underlying ARG-ST in (20a) and (b) respectively.

(20) a. ⟨NP, PP[t«-]⟩
b. ⟨⟨ ⟩ , NP, NP⟩

It is pretty clear that the two verbs exhibit both formal and semantic differences synchronically. I thus argue that, in the present Argobba, the verb of possession should be treated as having its own morphological, syntactic and semantic properties. I do believe that this assumption can work for Amharic too.

Discussion

Let us return now to the questions raised in section (3). As hinted earlier the relation of the structures between (11) and (15) could be explained differently in different theoretical approaches.

The structures in (11) and (15) can be analyzed differently in theories which employ D-structure and movement and in theories which do not use D-structure and movement. In this regard, we try to use the GB and the HPSG theories as representative for movement oriented and surface oriented theories to analyze the issue in question. In the discussion to come, first we analyze the structures in the sprit of GB approach (Chomsky 1981, 1986) and followed by the HPSG (Pollard and Sag 1994, Sag et al. 2003).

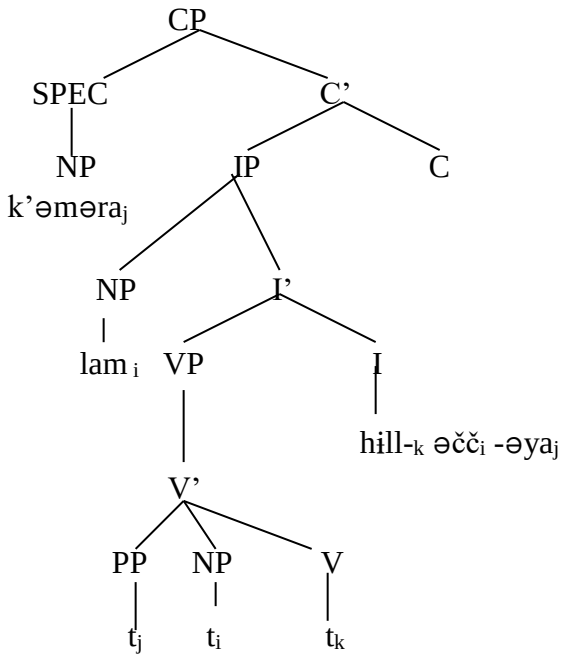
GB Analysis

When we see the relation of the structures in the sprit of the GB theory, the relation can be explained in terms of D-structure and move α or NP- movement to be specific. Along with this mechanism, it is possible to claim that the predicates have empty (e) external arguments in D-structure, and the surface structures are derived by the movement of internal arguments to the empty external argument positions. In light of this, it is possible to claim that the structures in (11) are closer to the D-structure for the corresponding structures in (15). Hence, the D-structures can be represented as in (21) below.

(21) a. [[e [[lə- k'əməra] lam hɨll-ø-əya]]]
CP IP VP PP to- Kemera cow has-3MSs-3FSo
b. [[e [[lə-an] xɨt hɨll-ø-əňň]]]
CP IP VP PP to- I sister has-3MSs-1So
c. [[e [[lə-musa] nɨšča lɨj hɨll-ø-əy]]]
CP IP VP PP to- Musa female child has-3MSs-3Mso

Following the proposed claim, the structures in (15) are transformed from the D-structures in (21) by the NP-movement. In line with this assumption, the structure in (15a) is derived by moving *lam* in (21a) to the subject position or SPEC of IP, and the verb bears the 3FS subject pronoun affix to agree with the moved NP, *lam*. However, the movement of *lam* alone does not yield the surface structure in (15a); thus *k'əməra* moves to the SPEC of CP and the verbal stem *hɨll-* also moves to I, the head of IP, which finally result in the surface structure in (15a). The S-structure which finally appears as surface structure in (15a) looks like the one in (22) in a tree structure.

(22)



In the transformation, the preposition is elided. Head to head and non-head to non-head movements are observed as well.

In this line of analysis, there are two major problems. First, following the theory, the movement of an internal argument to an external argument position is triggered by case (Chomsky 1986). This assumption leads us to claim that the reason for the movement of *lam* to SPEC of IP is to seek case, so as to escape case-filter. The claim however does not work for the empirical fact at hand because as *lam* is already in case position, it does not move to escape case-filter. Consequently, the movement is not triggered by case.

Second, following the GB theory again, *k'əməra* moves to the SPEC of CP (A-bar position) to have scope over the IP. Such a dislocation is not syntactically triggered, but takes place for pragmatic purposes. Such a movement is also possible in Argobba for pragmatic purpose as illustrated in (23). In the structure under consideration, in contrast, the dislocation is obligatory, the structure will be ill-formed otherwise. These problems, therefore, tell us that we cannot handle the empirical data in question with the assumption made in GB. Next, we shall try to analyze the structures in HPSG.

(23) a. weša k'əməra –n nəkkəs- ø- əya
dog Kemera-ACC bite.PF-3MSs-3FSo
'A dog bit Kemera.'
b. [k'əməra –n [weša nəkkəs- ø- əya]]
CP IP
Kemera-ACC dog bite.PF-3MSs-3FSo
'A dog bit KEMERA.'

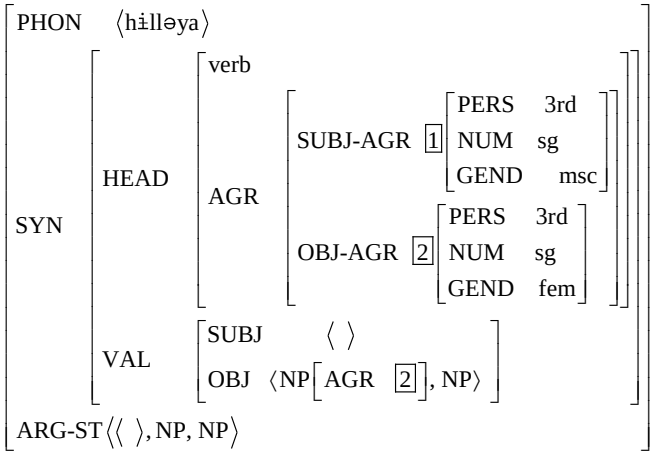
HPSG Analysis

HPSG is characterized by three basic properties. It is surface oriented, constraint-based and strongly lexicalist theory (Sag et al. 2003). The theory assumes that syntactic structures express grammatical information straightforwardly derivable from properties of words therein. There is no transformation of structures from assumed abstract structures. Consequently, there is no operational movement to

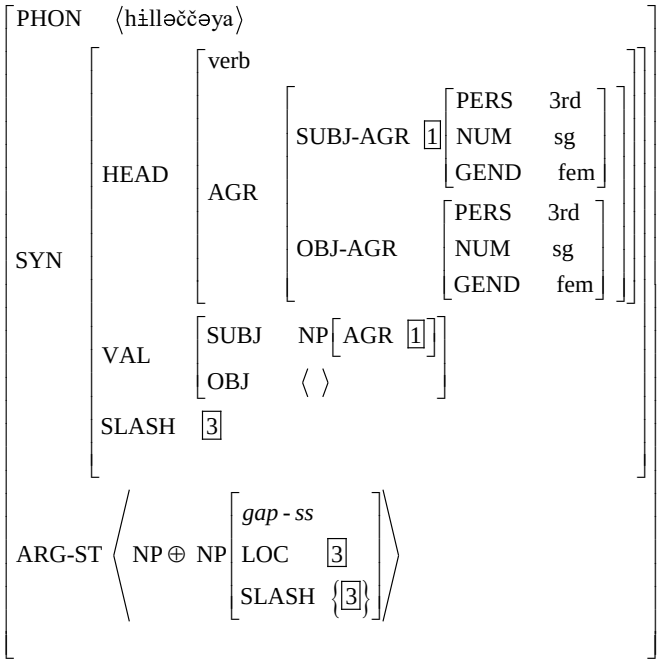
modify representations. Instead, lexical entries are the core elements to derive syntactic and semantic structures of a sentence. Along with the line of the basic tenets of HPSG, unlike in GB, the notions of D-structure and movement are not used in syntactic analysis. In the theory, the weight is given to lexical entries in the strings of a sentence. There are interacting rules and principles for the well-formedness of structures. Thus, in HPSG, the relation between (11) and (15) will not be handled by moving constituents from their canonical positions. A more natural HPSG analysis is to consider the verbal heads in (11) and (15) are distinct. That is, the structures in (11) and (15) are headed by verbs that correspond to two different lexical entries. The lexical entry for the verbal words *hɨll-əya* in (11a) and *hɨll-əčč -əya* in (15a), are different in their value for the attribute SUBJ as shown in (24).

(24)

a.

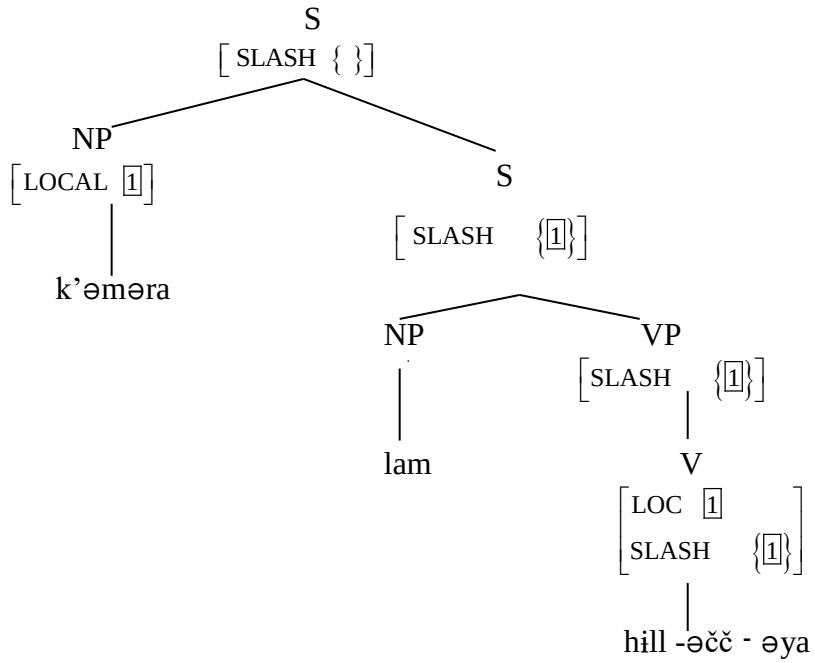

PHON ⟨hɨlləya⟩
SYN
HEAD
verb
AGR
SUBJ-AGR 1
PERS 3rd
NUM sg
GEND msc
OBJ-AGR 2
PERS 3rd
NUM sg
GEND fem
VAL
SUBJ ⟨ ⟩
OBJ ⟨NP[AGR 2], NP⟩
ARG-ST ⟨⟨ ⟩, NP, NP⟩

b.


PHON ⟨hɨlləččəya⟩
SYN
HEAD
verb
AGR
SUBJ-AGR 1
PERS 3rd
NUM sg
GEND fem
OBJ-AGR
PERS 3rd
NUM sg
GEND fem
VAL
SUBJ NP[AGR 1]
OBJ ⟨ ⟩
SLASH 3
ARG-ST ⟨NP ⊕ NP[gap - ss, LOC 3, SLASH {3}]⟩

Hence, in (15), *k'əm*əra appears out of the sentence, in topic position. The issue thus can be considered as unbounded dependency. The structure can be shown in a tree diagram as in (25).

(25)



As can be learned from the structures in (11) and (15), the 3MS and the non-3MS forms of the possessive verbs vary in their SUBJ and OBJ values. The difference can be shown in the generalized lexical entries for 3MS and non-3MS verb forms in (26a) and (b) respectively.

(26) a.

$$\begin{bmatrix} \text{PHON} & \langle \text{hɨll-3MSs} \rangle \\ \text{SYN} & \begin{bmatrix} \text{HEAD} & \begin{bmatrix} \text{verb} \\ \text{FORM} \quad \text{fin} \\ \text{AGR} \quad \begin{bmatrix} \text{SUBJ-AGR} & \text{3ms} \\ \text{OBJ-AGR} & \boxed{3} \end{bmatrix} \end{bmatrix} \\ \text{VAL} & \begin{bmatrix} \text{SUBJ} \quad \boxed{1}\langle\ \rangle \\ \text{OBJ} \quad \langle \text{NP}\left[\text{AGR} \quad \boxed{3}\right], \boxed{2}\text{NP} \rangle \end{bmatrix} \end{bmatrix} \\ \text{ARG-ST} & \left\langle \boxed{1} \oplus \text{NP}\left[\text{AGR} \quad \boxed{3}\right] \oplus \boxed{2} \right\rangle \end{bmatrix}$$

b.

$$\begin{bmatrix} \text{PHON} & \langle \text{hɨll-non3MSs} \rangle \\ \text{SYN} & \begin{bmatrix} \text{HEAD} & \begin{bmatrix} \text{verb} \\ \text{FORM} \quad \text{fin} \\ \text{AGR} \quad \begin{bmatrix} \text{SUBJ-AGR} & \boxed{4}\text{non-3MS} \\ \text{OBJ-AGR} & \boxed{3} \end{bmatrix} \end{bmatrix} \\ \text{VAL} & \begin{bmatrix} \text{SUBJ} \quad \left\langle \boxed{1}\text{NP}\left[\text{AGR} \quad \boxed{4}\right] \right\rangle \\ \text{OBJ} \quad \langle \boxed{2} \begin{bmatrix} \textit{gap-ss} \\ \text{LOC} \quad \boxed{5} \\ \text{SLASH} \quad \{\boxed{5}\} \end{bmatrix} \rangle \end{bmatrix} \end{bmatrix} \\ \text{ARG-ST} & \left\langle \boxed{1} \oplus \boxed{2}\left[\text{AGR} \quad \boxed{3}\right] \right\rangle \end{bmatrix}$$

The verbs of possession have phonetically null non-referential subject as well as phonetically realized referential subject. The former is observed only when the verbs have the AGR value 3MS for the subject. They have a referential subject when the AGR value for subject is non-3MS. In the HPSG analysis, the verbs have two lexical entries depending on the verbal word forms as 3MS or non-3MS agreement. Contrary to the claim made for Amharic, it is not possible to generalize that the subjects of the verbs of possession have no semantic role. It is rather safe to say that

the subject of the verbs of possession can be with or without semantic role depending on the AGR value for the subject because both properties are observed in the verbs of possession.

Conclusions

The paper has addressed the morphological and syntactic structures of the verbs of possession in Argobba. The verbs have the stem forms *hɨll-*, *ɨmbər-* and *nəwr-* for present, past and future respectively. These stem forms are also used as verbs of existence, which indicates a diachronic relation between the two class of verbs. The two verbs however show significant morphological and syntactic differences that help us to claim that the two verbs are synchronically different.

I have argued that the verbs of possession with a 3MS subject pronoun affix and the verbs of possession with a non-3MS subject pronoun affixes select non-referential and referential subject NPs respectively. In structures headed by the possessive verb with the non-3MS subject pronoun affix, dislocation of the possessor and the possessed NP is obligatory. This means that the verbal words with the subject pronoun affixes in question have different lexical entries. Irrespective of the subject pronoun affixes, the verbal words obligatorily bear object pronoun suffixes. I have tried to analyze the structure of sentences with possessive predicates in GB and HPSG approaches. I have argued that the standard GB analysis of the data in question is likely to fail. The HPSG approach that I have proposed, however, explains the relevant data by assuming that there are two verbal words, one which combines with a 3MS subject pronoun affix and the other with non-3MS pronoun affixes.

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