

Okere is doing something different in adnominal possession

Okrah Oppong*

Abstract. Cross-linguistically, some languages make a morphosyntactic distinction between alienable and inalienable adnominal possession, where alienable possession is more morphologically marked, and inalienable possession shows a tighter structural bond between the possessor and possessee. In this paper, I show that Okere violates these cross-linguistic generalizations differently. I also show that two types of *mó* occur in the language; one is a possessive marker, and the other is an independent pronoun. Again, I show that the nature of the possessive marker and the independent pronoun leads to a pro-drop in inalienable possession. The data and analysis in this paper favor proposing an overt possessive marker and a covert possessive marker. This paper adds to the literature on the exceptions to the cross-linguistic generalizations on adnominal possession by showing that the exceptions to the cross-linguistic generalizations may manifest differently in some languages.

Keywords. adnominal possession; attributive possession; Okere noun phrase; alienability; Guan language

1. Introduction. Possessive split languages have a pattern, and Okere violates the pattern. The pattern shows that possessive split languages make a morphosyntactic distinction between alienable and inalienable adnominal possession, where alienable possession is more morphologically marked, and inalienable possession shows a tighter structural bond between the possessor and possessee (Ultan 1978; Seiler 1983; Haiman 1983; Nichols 1992; Heine 1997; Haspelmath 2008; Myler 2018; Karvovskaya 2018). I provide this cross-linguistic generalization in (1) from Myler (2018: 1). I will refer to (1a) as the *markedness generalization* and (1b) as the *structural proximity generalization* in this paper.

- (1) a. If there is a contrast between alienable and inalienable possession with respect to the presence of morphological structure, alienable possession is always more morphologically marked.
 b. Inalienable possession involves a tighter structural bond between possessee and possessor.

In Okere we see that inalienable possession is more morphologically marked, and the structural bond between the possessor and possessee in inalienable possession is not tighter than that of alienable possession. I illustrate this in (2).

- (2) a. è-nyé à kyá
 SG-man DEF building
 ‘the man’s building’
 b. mó kyá
 3SG building
 ‘his/her building’

* I am grateful to Atiemoh Florence, Atiemoh Michael, Agnes Kokwe Budu, and Obiri Samuel, for their excellent assistance during the data collection. I would also like to thank Neil Myler, Elizabeth Coppock, and Kate Lindsey for serving as readers of this paper, which was my qualifying paper. Lastly, I would like to thank the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for funding my MPhil degree at the University of Ghana, where the data for this study was first collected. All shortcomings of this paper are mine. Author: Okrah Oppong, Boston University (ookrah@bu.edu).

- c. è-nyé à mó kɛ́
 SG-man DEF POSS wife
 ‘the man’s wife’
- d. mó kɛ́
 POSS;3SG wife
 ‘his/her wife’

In (2), ɔkere violates the markedness since there is an extra morphological marker in (2c). On the face of the data, the structural proximity generalization is difficult to establish because (2b) and (2d) have the same linear structure, but I will argue that ɔkere violates the structural proximity generalization. To do that, I make the following points.

- (3) a. ɔkere has two types of *mó*, one which is a possessive marker.
 b. ɔkere exhibits pro-drop in possessive constructions.
 c. There are two Poss heads, one overt and one covert, and both form a constituent with the following noun.
 e. The need to revisit the structural proximity generalization.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 provides background information about the ɔkere language, its people, and the data collection procedure. Section 3 discusses the literature on adnominal possession focusing on the structure of this type of possession and the concept of alienable and inalienable possession cross-linguistically. Section 4 gives an in-depth analysis of adnominal possession in ɔkere. In this section, the paper gives reasons why the claims of the paper are well grounded. Section 5 provides some typological implications and future directions. The conclusion to this paper is provided in section 6.

2. The language and its speakers. ɔkere belongs to the broader Niger-Congo family. It is a Guan language that falls under the Kwa language family. ɔkere is a Hill Guan variety spoken in the Akuapem mountains by some 80,000 speakers alongside Akuapem-Twi (a dialect of Akan), as a second language. A large population widely knows the ɔkere language, and people of the Ghanaian community as Kyerepon (Cherepon).

3. The literature on adnominal possession. In many languages, there are no morphosyntactic distinctions in adnominal possession. When there is a distinction (grammatically) between alienable and inalienable possession, alienable possession involves a large set of members, and the set of inalienable nouns usually is a closed set (Nichols 1988 cited in Heine 1997). This situation is attested in many languages, and ɔkere also follows this pattern. Heine (1997: 10) shows that the nouns or concepts that are often categorized as inalienable cross-linguistically are “kinship roles, body parts, relational spatial concepts, parts of other items, physical and mental states, and nominalizations where the ‘possessee’ is a verbal noun.” Languages differ in what they categorize as inalienable nouns, and as such, it is difficult to give a universal ranking of inalienable domains (Heine 1997).

In Paamese and Tinrin, for instance, kinship, body parts, and spatial relations count as inalienable, but in many Australian languages, kinship relations are alienable while body parts are inalienable (Heine 1997). Even in some languages, certain words which may fall under a category of nouns may behave differently from the group they fall within. We see this in Saker, a NE-New Guinea language, where kinship relations are inalienable, but words for ‘husband,’ ‘wife,’ and ‘child’ are alienable. Chappell and McGregor (1996), following Lévy-Bruhl (1914),

add that inalienability involves any form of a tight relationship between the possessor and the possessee (Heine 1997). In what follows, I provide examples of alienable and inalienable possession.

3.1. ALIENABLE AND INALIENABLE POSSESSION. The constructions discussed in this section follow markedness and structural proximity generalization, which I rephrase here: when there is a split in adnominal inalienability marking, the alienable possession will have an overt possessive marker¹, while in the inalienable possession, the possessive marker is morphologically absent. Structurally, the relationship between the participants in inalienable possession is closer than inalienable possession. I provide illustrations below.

- (4) Kabba (Moser 2004: 120-121 cited in Haspelmath 2008)
- | | | | | | | |
|----|------------------|-----------|-------|----|-----------------------|---------|
| a. | kùlà | lè | déné | b. | məkəjə̀ | gòlé |
| | work | of | woman | | knee | his.leg |
| | ‘a woman's work’ | | | | ‘the knee of his leg’ | |
- (5) Dogon (Plungian 1995: 35 cited in Haspelmath 2008)
- | | | | | | | |
|----|------------|-----------|-----|----|---------------|--------|
| a. | tigɛ | wɔ | mɔ | b. | u | ba |
| | name | he | GEN | | you | father |
| | ‘his name’ | | | | ‘your father’ | |
- (6) O'odham (Zepeda 1983)
- | | | | |
|----|----------------------|----|-------------|
| a. | ñ-mi:stol- ga | b. | ñ-je'e |
| | 1SG-cat-POSS | | 1SG-mother |
| | ‘my cat’ | | ‘my mother’ |
- (7) Puluwat (Elbert 1974:55, 61 cited from Haspelmath 2008)
- | | | | | |
|----|----------------|--------|----|-----------|
| a. | nay -iy | hamwol | b. | pay-iy |
| | POSS-1SG | chief | | hand-1SG |
| | ‘my chief’ | | | ‘my hand’ |
- (8) Abun (Berry & Berry 1999:77-82))
- | | | | | | | |
|----|-------------|-----------|--------|----|----------|------|
| a. | ji | bi | nggwe | b. | ji | syim |
| | I | of | garden | | I | arm |
| | ‘my garden’ | | | | ‘my arm’ | |
- (9) Jeli (Tröbs 1998:167-169 cited from Haspelmath 2008)
- | | | | | | | |
|----|--------------|-----------|---------|----|---------------|---------|
| a. | soma | ra | monbilo | b. | soma | bulo-ni |
| | soma | of | car | | soma | arm-PL |
| | ‘Soma's car’ | | | | ‘Soma's arms’ | |
- (10) Kampan (Michael, 2012 cited from Myler 2016:50)
- | | | | |
|----|--------------------|----|-----------|
| a. | no-biha- ne | b. | no-gito |
| | 1SG-bow-poss | | 1SG-head |
| | ‘my bow’ | | ‘my head’ |

The constructions in (4-10) are consistent with the markedness and the structural proximity generalization in (3). In these examples, the possessors licensing the absent possessive marker are either kinship nouns (5&6) or body parts (4, 7-10), and those that license the possessive marker are non-kinship and non-body part nouns. These constructions have been given some

¹ Here referring to the overt morphological marker.

motivation by Haiman (1983), who claims that the possessive marker is absent when the possessee is closer to the possessor and present when the possessee and the possessor are not close enough. Haiman (1983) asserts that ‘arm’ in (9b), for instance, is not seen to be separate from the body; likewise, ‘garden’ in (9a), so referring to ‘arm’ involves a smaller semantic distance compared to ‘garden,’ hence the presence of *bi* to indicate the distance between the possessor and possessee.

Haspelmath (2008), on the other hand, argues that it is the frequency of occurrence that plays a role in the absence or presence of the possessive marker, in the sense that the greater proportion of the use of a noun in a possessive construction, the more likely is it for the possessive marking to be reduced. Thus, since ‘arm’ occurs more frequently than ‘garden’ in possessive constructions, the possessive marker is expected not to surface. Haspelmath (2008) further adds that the syntax of adnominal possession is the same in that overt possessive marker is expected and that languages do not usually express it when they are inherently possessed to avoid redundancy. This assertion is entertained in this paper such that the syntax for adnominal possession in *Okere* will either have a null or overt possessive marker. The motivation for this is encouraged by Myler (2018), where possession relations on non-inherently relational roots are introduced by POSS head. This is discussed in detail in section 4.

4. Inalienability in *Okere*. As has become explicit at this point, *Okere* makes a grammatical distinction between adnominal possession in terms of (in)alienability. There are two kinds of adnominal possessive constructions in *Okere*. Kinship possessive constructions have an extra morphological marker where other kinds of possessive constructions do not. The extra morphological marker in the data below is *mó*.

(11) Nominal possessor with kinship possessee

- | | | | | |
|----|------------------|-------|---------|------|
| a. | Yaw | *(mó) | ní | |
| | Yaw | POSS | mother | |
| | ‘Yaw’s mother’ | | | |
| b. | John | *(mó) | gyámé | |
| | John | POSS | sibling | |
| | ‘John’s sibling’ | | | |
| c. | è-nyé | à | *(mó) | ké |
| | SG-man | DEF | POSS | wife |
| | ‘the man’s wife’ | | | |

(12) Pronominal possessor with kinship possessee

- | | | |
|----|------------------|--------|
| a. | mé | ní |
| | POSS;1SG | mother |
| | ‘my mother’ | |
| b. | wó | ní |
| | POSS;2SG | mother |
| | ‘your mother’ | |
| c. | mó | ní |
| | POSS;3SG | mother |
| | ‘his/her mother’ | |
| d. | mó | ké |
| | POSS;3SG | wife |
| | ‘his/her wife’ | |

(13) Nominal possessor with body parts and sortal possessee

- a. è-nyé à (*mó) àbá
SG-man DEF POSS hand
'the man's hand'
- b. John (*mó) téí
John POSS food
'John's food'
- c. Kofi (*mó) àfúrí
Kofi POSS farm
'Kofi's farm'

(14) Pronominal possessor with body parts and sortal possessee

- a. mó hù
3SG head
'his/her head'
- b. mè téí
1SG food
'my food'
- c. wó àfúrí
2SG farm
'your farm'

From the examples provided above in (11-14), possession involving kinship² nouns are more morphologically marked than other possession involving other types of nouns. The data in (12) also tells us that pronominal possessors involving kinship nouns behave differently from non-pronominal kinship possession. In pronominal kinship, we have a juxtaposition of two lexical items, which on the surface looks like the possessor and the possessee, just like we have in non-kinship possession, but it is possible for pronominal possession involving kinship nouns to have the same morphosyntactic structure as the non-pronominal kinship possession in a focused context. I discuss this in section 4.1.

4.1 THE POSSESSIVE MARKER, *mó*. In this paper, I argue that two types of *mó* exist in *Okere*: an independent pronoun, *mó*, and a possessive marker, *mó*, which only occurs with inalienable possession. This position is motivated by Toivonen's (2000) analysis of Finnish possessive suffixes.

According to Aikhenvald (2013: 41), possessive markers cross-linguistically “may have additional meanings and extensions, not directly related to possession, nor ownership.” It has been attested that the possessive marker can mark definiteness (Collinder 1957; Schlachter 1960; Tauli 1966; Fraurud 2001; Suihkonen 2005; Luo 2013). Looking at the literature on possessive markers, it makes sense that the possessive marker in *Okere* can be described within the context of Aikhenvald (2013) that it has external features that it shares with other aspects of the *Okere* grammar.

The possessive marker, *mó*, is homophonous with the 3SG object marker (see Table 1 below adapted from Oppong (2019)), a fact that is attested in other related languages. This is a common

² It is also important to mention that not all kinship nouns in *Okere* are inalienable. The kinship noun *wɔfa* ‘uncle’ does not occur with the possessive marker, *mó*. *John mó wɔfa.

pattern in the area where the possessive marker and the 3SG are homophonous, also found in Fante (Boadi 2010) and Tongugbe (Kpoglu 2019). It is, therefore, not surprising that the possessive marker, *mó*, in ɔkere, has the same number and person features as the third-person object pronouns. The possessive marker in ɔkere agrees with the possessor in number and person, thereby causing it to spell out in different forms, just like the pronouns in ɔkere. In other words, the possessive marker in ɔkere, POSS, has unvalued number and person features, which get interpreted by the feature specifications of the possessor.

Person and number	Subject pronoun	Object pronoun
1SG	mè	mè
2SG	wò	wò
3SG	á ³ /mó	mó
1PL	èné	èné
2PL	èné	èné
3PL	èmó	èmó
Singular/ Plural	é/ é	mó/ èmó
Inanimate		

Table 1. Table showing the pronominal system in ɔkere

4.2 ARGUMENTS FOR A SPLIT ANALYSIS IN ɔKERE. Toivonen (2000) discusses independent pronouns and suffixes in Finnish possession and proposes a lexical split analysis (a single phonological form corresponding to two different functions, thereby having different lexical entries) for the suffixes and rejects a uniform account. Toivonen's (2000) analysis, involving a dual function for the possessive suffix in Finnish possessives, is relevant to the discussion of pronominal *mó* and POSS *mó* in ɔkere; in fact, my proposed analysis will build on elements of it.

Possessive DPs in Finnish can be made up of two elements that both have person and number features: a suffix and an independent pronoun. The suffix is obligatory in first and second-person possessive DPs, but the independent pronoun is optional, but that is not the case for third-person possessive suffix. As a result, she rejects a uniform analysis for the suffixes. Her main empirical argument is based on the observation that the presence of an independent pronoun in the third person changes the interpretation. This is illustrated in (15) and (16).

- (15) Finniah (Toivonen 2000: 590)
 Pekka pesee autoa-nsa.
 Pekka washes car-3Px
 'Pekkai is washing his/heri/*j car.'
- (16) Finniah (Toivonen 2000: 590)
 Pekka pesee hänen autoa-nsa.
 Pekka washes his/her car-3Px
 'Pekkai is washing his/her*i/j car.'

In the absence of the independent pronoun *hänen*, as in (15), a reflexive reading for the possessive suffix is required, but in its presence, a reflexive interpretation is disallowed, as in (16). According to the binding theory of Chomsky (1981), an 'anaphor' must be bound in its binding domain, and a 'pronoun' must be free. In (15), *-nsa* behaves like an anaphor, and in (16), it does not. A uniform analysis that did not treat *-nsa* as an anaphor would overgenerate for (15),

³ In an unpublished section of a manuscript by Collins (no date), *á* is a weak third person subject pronoun in ɔkere.

allowing either an anaphoric or non-anaphoric interpretation. A uniform analysis that treated *-nsa* as an anaphor would work perfectly for (15), but it would not allow the free reading in (16). Therefore, positing that the form *-nsa* has two different lexical entries is the best analysis for Finnish. In other words, there are two lexical items that have the same phonological form but separate lexical entries.

Following Toivonen's arguments above, I present an argument for a split analysis here based on the data in *Okere*. The situation in Finnish that Toivonen discusses is not the same as what we find in *Okere* because, in *Okere*, there is no obligatory reflexive interpretation when there is an overt pronoun. Therefore, we cannot use the reflexive vs. non-reflexive argument to decide whether there are two *mó*'s or one *mó*, but nevertheless, an argument can be made on the basis of the facts. Suppose that there is only one *mó* which is a pronoun; then we would expect that it should be optional. If it's a pronoun, and its only duty is to refer to the R-expression, then its absence should not cause any problems or give different interpretations. As it occurs in Finnish, pronoun doubling in the first and second person possessive constructions allows an independent pronoun to be omitted. If *Okere* is a language that permits pronoun doubling, then it may be expected that the pronoun can be optional without arriving at ungrammaticality, but that is not the case in *Okere*.

Furthermore, you would expect it to be possible in all constructions if it's a pronoun. If it was only one *mó*, the pronoun, then we should be able to double the possessors in *John mó ní* 'John's mother' as it happens in kinship nouns and all other kinds of nouns illustrated below.

(17) John (**mó*) àbá
 John POSS hand
 'John's hand'

(18) John (**mó*) kyá
 John POSS building
 'John's building'

The constructions in (17) and (18) are ungrammatical. This goes against the claim that there is only one pronoun since pronoun doubling should be blocked by any possessee. If, on the other hand, it is a possessive marker that is only licensed with certain kinds of nouns, we can explain the obligatoriness of *mó* in inalienable possession because the syntax requires it. I, therefore, propose that we have two different lexical entries for *mó*: the referential pronoun *mó* in *mó kyá* 'his/her building' and the possessive marker *mó* in *John mó ní* 'John's mother.' This analysis explains the facts in *Okere* in the sense that *mó* is obligatory if the possessed noun is a kinship noun. Since only inalienable possession can license *mó*, then *mó* is a lexical item that has a relationship with only kinship nouns. If *mó* is a pronoun in the language, then its distribution should not be constrained to a group of possessed nouns. That said, I will show in the ensuing sections that the possessive marker, *mó*, and the pronoun, *mó*, occur at different syntactic positions.

As illustrated in (17) and (18), the POSS heads should be different for the constructions to be grammatical. If POSS head must be different in (17) and (18), then it means the POSS heads in the two constructions do not bear the features of the POSS head in inalienable construction. Therefore, the POSS head in alie will have no unvalued features since the POSS head in inalienable possession bears unvalued features. I show the implication of POSS head having unvalued features in the subsequent paragraph.

4.3 ARGUMENT FOR PRO-DROP IN OKERE. In this section, I make a case for my claims that the pro-drop phenomenon is attested in Okere. The analysis made here largely follows Roberts’s (2009) defective goal approach.

In inalienable possession involving pronominal possessors, the pronominal possessor is dropped. The deletion of the pronominal possessor is akin to a deletion analysis of null subjects, which has received several proposals in the literature (compare Rizzi 1986; Huang 2000; Chomsky 2001; Holmberg 2005; Roberts 2009). The view that *pro* has valued features at SpecTP and behaves just like an overt pronoun proposed by Holmberg (2005) is entertained in the current paper on Okere, where *pro* also bears valued features at SpecPossP. POSS in Okere agrees with the possessor in inalienable possession and bears unvalued features [uNum: __, uPers: __], which need to be valued by *pro* because *pro* is valued since if POSS and *pro* have unvalued features, neither of them can value each other. Therefore, following Roberts (2009: 60), the agreement relation between POSS and the *pro* will be represented as shown in (19).

- (19) a. Trigger for Agree
 POSS[uPers: __], [uNum: __] D[Pers:a, Num:b]
 b. Outcome of Agree
 POSS[Pers:a], [Num:b] D[~~Pers:a, Num:b~~]

The outcome of Agree in (b) shows a feature bundle being presented twice, so one of the copies must be deleted before Spell Out, following Nunes’ argument of chain reduction (Nunes 2004) and Roberts’ (2009:76) generalization that “[d]efective goals always delete/never have a PF realization independently of their probe.” Following Roberts (2009), Livitz (2011:108) argues that *pro* is “silent cross-linguistically because it is a defective goal whenever it enters into an Agree relation.”

Using the defective goal account,⁴ Livitz (2011) argues that *pro* can be overt when it bears a feature absent in the probe that it agrees with. In other words, *pro* can be overt if its features are not a subset of the probe. Adopting the thinking of Livitz (2011), *pro* is overt if it has a feature that is not present in poss. This account aligns with *pro* in Okere in that *pro* is overt when it has [+FOC] feature specifications. This is illustrated below.

- (20) mó mó ní
 pro;foc POSS;3sg mother
 ‘his/her, his/her mother.’
 (21) wó wó ní
 pro;foc POSS;2sg mother
 ‘your, your mother’

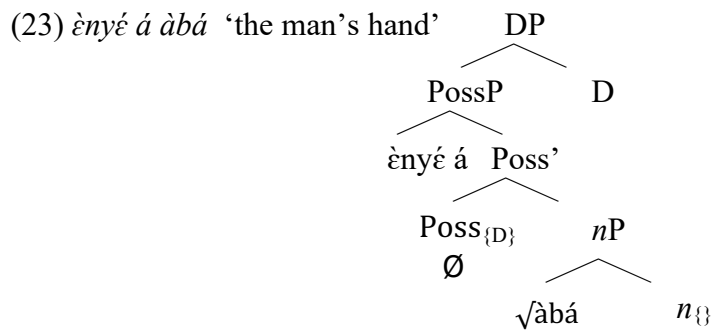
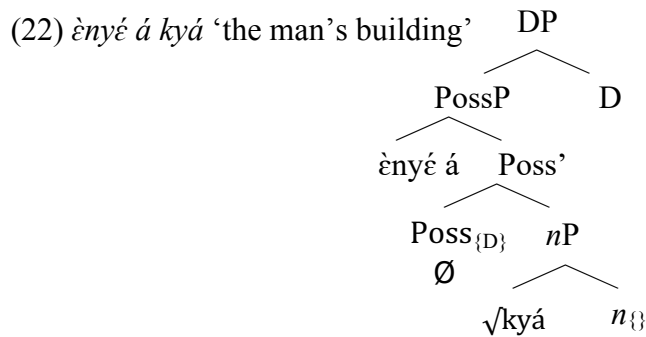
In (20), *mó*, the left edge bears focus and hence bears [+FOC] and takes the form of POSS based on the person and number features on poss. This makes it possible for the overt realization of the left edge *pro* in (20) and (21). The above analysis does not work in alienable possession since POSS is always null. For an alienable possession to bear focus, the focus element, in this case, the pronoun, will have to be introduced higher above the possessor because the possessor node will not be a landing site for the focus element since it is already occupied.

⁴ **Defective Goal:** A Goal G is defective iff G’s formal features are a proper subset of those of G’s Probe (Robert 2009: 70).

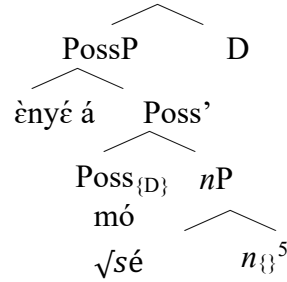
So far, the data has shown that Okere violates the markedness and the structural proximity generalizations. The markedness generalization is violated because inalienable possession involves an overt possessive marker. This is in opposition to the markedness generalization. As it stands, the structural proximity generalization is also violated because, on the face of the data, the structural bond between the possessor and the possessee in alienable possession is closer than inalienable possession. The presence of the overt possessive marker that breaks the juxtaposition of the possessor and possessee in only inalienable makes it possible to conclude that Okere is a counterexample to the structural proximity generalization just like markedness generalization. However, in the next section, I show that the structure of adnominal possession that I propose for Okere will show a different violation of the structural proximity generalization.

4.4 THE SYNTAX OF ADNOMINAL POSSESSION IN OKERE. As mentioned earlier, the data in Okere make it challenging to postulate two different structures in Okere following Myler's (2018) account. Since body parts are inherently relational nouns and bear $n_{part-of}$, they can introduce a possession relation (Myler 2018), but the behavior of sortal (not being able to introduce a possession relation) and kinship nouns in the language suggests that *poss* is always present, but it only spells out in kinship possessive constructions, a prediction made by Haspelmath (2008). This account violates the structural proximity generalization because positing that a *poss* head is always present in Okere adnominal possession leads to a conclusion that inalienable possession is as tight as alienable possession. I refer to the violation of the structural proximity generalization as 'partial' and the markedness generalization as 'total' because of how Okere violates these generalizations.

Based on the account given in this section, the syntactic trees for sortal nouns, body parts, and kinship are presented in (22), (23), and (24), respectively.

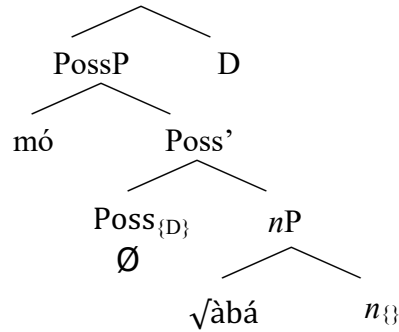


(24) *ènyé á mó sé* ‘the man’s father’ DP

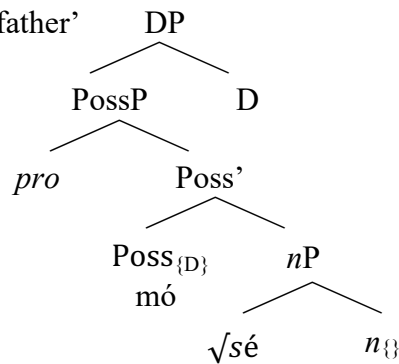


In the case of pronominal possessors, inalienable will involve a *pro-drop* as discussed in section 4.3 while alienable possession will involve an overt pronoun. I illustrate this below.

(25) *mó àbá* ‘his/her hand’ DP



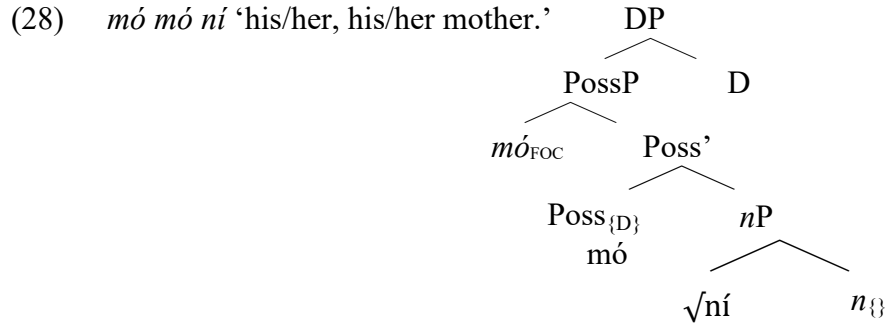
(26) *mó sé* ‘his/her father’ DP



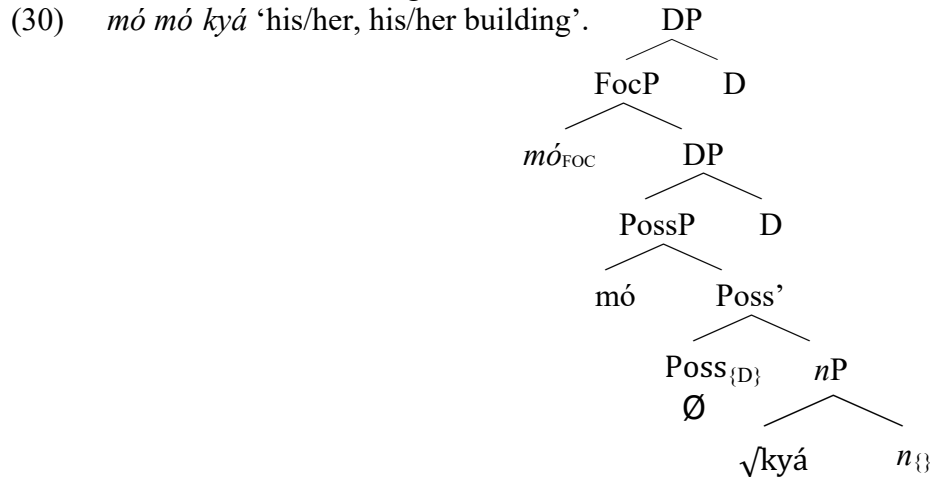
Again, as established in section 4.3, *mó* can be doubled when we have a pronominal possessor and a focused context. This gives rise to constructions like (27) and (29) and their corresponding tree structures in (28) and (30), respectively.

(27) *mó mó ní*
 PRO;FOC POSS;3SG mother
 ‘his/her, his/her mother.’

⁵ In Myler (2018) the head of relational noun will bear a category D so it can introduce a specifier.



(29) *mó mó kyá*
 3SG;FOC 3SG building
 ‘his/her, his/her building’



The tree structures (28) and (30) are quite different because in (30), the possessor slot is filled and, therefore, prevents the [+FOC] *mó* from landing at the possessor slot, as we have in (28). I propose this structure based on the claim made in this paper that POSS is always present in the syntax. If POSS is always present, then *mó mó kyá* ‘his/her, his/her building’ will have a different syntactic structure compared to *mó mó ní* ‘his/her, his/her mother’ just as *mó kyá* ‘his/her building’ has a different syntactic structure when compared to *mó ní* ‘his/her mother.’

5. Typological implications and future research. It is essential to mention that *Okere* is not novel. Nichols (1992) and Myler (2018) made this observation in *Dizi*, an Omotic language spoken in Ethiopia, and *Tzutujil*, a Mayan language, respectively. The behavior of *Dizi*, *Tzutujil*, and *Okere* are only a few of the many languages that do not follow the cross-linguistic generalizations. Even though the three languages violate the cross-linguistic generalizations, the generalizations cannot be abandoned statistically, an opinion held by Nichols (1992).

The violations caused by the analysis provided for *Okere* as it stands mean that some languages may violate only one or aspects of the two generalizations. This is because a revised version of the structural proximity generalization stated here, *the structural bond between the possessor and the possessee is always at least as tight or tighter with inalienable possession than with alienable possession*, will work perfectly for languages that have (in)alienability distinction and follow the two cross-linguistic generalizations on adnominal possession.

If *Okere* may violate only the markedness generalization when the structural proximity generalization is adopted, does that mean the markedness generalization should be seen as a

statistical universal? On the other hand, does it also mean the structural proximity generalization becomes an absolute universal? I leave these questions for future research.

6. Conclusion. From the investigations done in this paper, kinship nouns form a group of inalienable nouns whose morphological structure involves more marking than alienable possession. This contrasts with the markedness generalization, which predicts that alienable possession will be more morphologically marked. Regarding the structural proximity generalization, the account provided in this paper concludes that there is no difference between the syntax of alienable and inalienable possession in the sense that POSS is always present (overt POSS and covert POSS). This conclusion violates the structural proximity generalization and leads to the revised version of the structural proximity generalization.

As regards the possessive marker, the paper argued that two forms of *mó* exist. The paper also argued that *pro*-drop is attested in Okere because the pronominal possessor is omitted in inalienable possession. The omission results from the fact that the pronominal possessor and the possessive marker in inalienable possession have the same form and bear the same number and person features and that the possessor is recoverable in the syntax when it bears focus.

References

- Berry, Keith & Berry, Christine. 1999. *A description of Abun: A West Papuan language of Irian Jaya*. Canberra: Pacific Linguistics Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies.
- Boadi, Lawrence A. 2010. *The Akan noun phrase: Its structure and meaning*. Accra, GH: Black Mask Limited.
- Collins, Chris. no date. *Tense, aspect and negation in Okere*. Manuscript. New York.
- Collinder, Björn. 1957. *Survey of the Uralic languages*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell.
- Chappell, Hilary & McGregor, William. 1996. Prolegomena to a theory of inalienability. In Hilary Chappell & William McGregor (eds.), *The Grammar of inalienability: A typological perspective on body part terms and the part-whole relation*, 3–30. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Chomsky, Noam. 1981. *Lectures on government and binding*. Dordrecht: Foris.
- Chomsky, Noam. 2001. Derivation by phase. In Michael Kenstowicz (ed.) *Ken Hale: A life in language*, 1–53 Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Dakubu, Mary E Kropp. 1988. Guang. In Mary E. Kropp Dakubu (eds.), *The languages of Ghana*. London: Kegan Paul.
- Elbert, Samuel. H. 1974. *Puluwat grammar* (Pacific Linguistics, Series B, no. 29). Canberra: Dept. of Linguistics, Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University.
- Fraurud, Kari. 2001. Possessives with extensive use: A source of definite articles? In Irène Baron, Michael Herslund & Finn Sørensen (eds.), *Dimensions of possession* (Typological Studies in Language), 243–267. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Haiman, John. 1983. Iconic and economic motivation. *Language* 59. 781–819.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/413373>.
- Haspelmath, Martin. 2008. Syntactic universals and usage frequency: Alienable vs. inalienable possessive constructions. Course handout from the Leipzig Spring School on Linguistic Diversity.
- Heine, Bernd. 1997. *Possession: Cognitive sources, forces, and grammaticalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Holmberg, Anders. 2005. Is there a little pro? Evidence from Finnish. *Linguistic Inquiry* 36. 533–64. <https://doi.org/10.1162/002438905774464322>.

- Huang, Yan. 2000. *Anaphora. A cross-linguistic study*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Karvovskaya, Elena. 2018. *The typology and formal semantics of adnominal possession*. Leiden: Leiden University dissertation.
- Kpoglu, Promise. D. 2019. *Possessive constructions in Tongugbe, an Ewe dialect*. Leiden: Leiden University dissertation.
- Lévy-Bruhl, Lucien. 1914. L'expression de la possession dans les langues mélanésiennes. *Mémoires de la Société de Linguistique de Paris* 19(2). 96–104.
- Livitz, Inna. 2011. Incorporating PRO: A defective-goal analysis. In Neil Myler & Jim Wood (eds.), *NYU Working Papers in Linguistics* 3, 95–119. New York: New York University.
- Luo, Yongxian. 2013. Possessive constructions in Mandarin Chinese. In Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald & R. M. W. Dixon (eds.), *Possession and ownership: A crosslinguistic typology*, 186–207. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Moser, Rosmarie. 2004. *Kabba: A Nilo-Saharan language of the Central African Republic*. Munich: LINCOM Europa.
- Michael, Lev. 2012. Possession in Nanti. In Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald & R. M. W. Dixon (eds.), *Possession and ownership: A crosslinguistic typology*, 149–166. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Myler, Neil. 2016. *Building and interpreting possession sentences*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Myler, Neil. 2018. Attributive possession and the contributions of roots. Presentation at DGfS 40, Universität Stuttgart.
- Nichols, Johanna. 1992. *Linguistic diversity in space and time*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Nichols, Johanna. 1988. On alienable and inalienable possession. In William Shipley (eds.), *In honor of Mary Haas*, 475–521. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Nunes, Jairo. 2004. *Linearization of chains and sideward movement*. MIT Press.
- Oppong, Okrah. 2019. *The noun phrase in Okere*. Accra, GH: University of Ghana thesis.
- Plungian, Vladimir. 1995. *Dogon*. Munich: Lincom Europa.
- Rizzi, Luigi. 1986. Null objects in Italian and the theory of *pro*. *Linguistic Inquiry* 17. 501–57. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4178501>.
- Roberts, Ian. 2009. A deletion analysis of null subjects. In Theresa Biberauer, Anders Holmberg, Ian Roberts & Michelle Sheehan (eds.), *Parametric variation: Null subjects in minimalist theory*, 58–87. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schlachter, Wolfgang. 1960. *Studien zum Possessivsuffix des Syrjänischen*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag.
- Seiler, Hansjakob. 1983. *Possession as an operational dimension of language*. Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag.
- Suihkonen, Pirkko. 2005. On the categories and functions developed from the possessive and deictic suffixes in Udmurt. In Cornelius Hasselblatt, Eino Koponen & Anna Widmer (eds.), *Lihkkun lehkos! Beiträge zur Finnougristik aus Anlaß des sechzigsten Geburtstages von Hans-Hermann Bartens*, 401–432. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag.
- Tauli, Valter. 1966. *Structural tendencies in Uralic languages* (Indiana University Publications, Uralic and Altaic Series 17). The Hague: Mouton.
- Toivonen, Ida. 2000. The morphosyntax of Finnish possessives. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory* 18(3). 579–609. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1006424127728>.
- Ultan, Russell. 1978. Toward a typology of substantival possession. In Joseph H. Greenberg, Charles A. Ferguson, Edith A. Moravcsik (eds.), *Universals of human language*, IV: Syntax, 11–49. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Zepeda, Olivia. 1983. *A Papago grammar*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.