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This thesis is devoted to the description and analysis of possessive constructions in Tɔ̀nɔ̀gbe. It is based on empirical data, transcribed and annotated, which can be obtained in ELAN, FLEX and DOC. formats from the DANS online platform. This volume, has attempted to understand the relationship that exists between possessive constructions, on the one hand, and locative and existential constructions on the other hand. In addition to this, a sketch grammar of Tɔ̀nɔ̀gbe is provided. Consequently, the work has been divided into six chapters.

Chapter 1 presents the sketch grammar of Tɔ̀nɔ̀gbe. The sketch grammar offers a survey of the phonetics, morphology and syntax of Tɔ̀nɔ̀gbe. It highlighted, especially, the aspects of Tɔ̀nɔ̀gbe that distinguish it from other dialects of the Ewe language. With respect to phonetics, it was observed that the vowel and consonant sounds of Tɔ̀nɔ̀gbe are the same as the vowel and consonant sounds of other Ewe dialects. The tones of Tɔ̀nɔ̀gbe, however, are rather peculiar. As is the case in other Ewe dialects, Tɔ̀nɔ̀gbe has three level tones, and one contour tone. But unlike other Ewe dialects, the duration of the mid-tone in root nouns of Tɔ̀nɔ̀gbe is longer; and the low tone of root nouns is distinguished from the mid-tone by the duration contrast. On the morphological level, it was observed that some of the morphological processes that operate in Tɔ̀nɔ̀gbe are reduplication, composition and affixation. Finally, on the syntactic level, it was observed that the noun and verb phrase structure of Tɔ̀nɔ̀gbe are the same as the noun and verb phrase structure in other Ewe dialects. However, Tɔ̀nɔ̀gbe differs from the other dialects as to the forms that occupy the slots of the phrase structures. The categories that were surveyed in this respect were intensifiers, articles, demonstratives, tense/aspect/modal particles, adpositions and focus markers.

It appears from the survey of the grammar of Tɔ̀nɔ̀gbe that the properties of the dialect are a mix of the two big dialect groups of the Ewe language: inland and coastal dialects. Thus, Tɔ̀nɔ̀gbe assembles forms that are peculiar to each of these two dialect groups, and constructs paradigms based on them. This process is at work at all levels of the grammar of Tɔ̀nɔ̀gbe. On the phonetic level for instance,

Tɔ̀ṅúgbè tones can be grouped into three (likewise inland dialects); but the superhigh tone of coastal dialects is present in Tɔ̀ṅúgbè (see Kpoglu & Patin (2018) for details on the superhigh tone in Tɔ̀ṅúgbè). Another example is the demonstrative paradigm of Tɔ̀ṅúgbè, in which forms from both northern and coastal dialects are assembled into a new paradigm; and then new forms constructed based on the novel paradigm. This mixture can be traced to the heterogeneous origins of the Tɔ̀ṅú people.

This attribute of mixing forms from other dialects and then constructing new systems based on the mixture is not restricted to the grammatical categories but also extends to syntactic constructions such as the possessive constructions. After presenting a typology of possessive constructions, and the relationships that they have with locative and existential constructions, possessive constructions were extensively discussed. In order to grasp the nature of the possessive constructions of Tɔ̀ṅúgbè, the features that characterize possessive constructions were extensively detailed at all levels: morphological, phrasal, and clausal levels. The meanings that are expressed at each level are carefully spelled out; and the subtlest of variations that occur at both syntactic and semantic levels were identified. The constructions were surveyed under three major groupings: attributive possessive constructions (chapter 3), predicative possessive constructions (chapter 4) and external possessor constructions (chapter 5). A sixth chapter, dedicated to understanding the relationship between possessive constructions, locative constructions and existential constructions closes the volume.

Attributive possessive constructions were grouped into constructions constructed in syntax and constructions constructed either at the interface between syntax and morphology or simply in morphology. Constructions constructed in syntax are of two types: constructions involving a connective, and constructions involving juxtaposition. It was observed that the possessees in both constructions involving a connective and juxtaposed constructions have only high and low tones; that the units involved in these constructions are phrasal units; and that each construction expresses a particular conceptualized relation between the possessee and possessor. I showed that while

constructions involving the connective construe the possessee as independent of the possessor, juxtaposed constructions express an intimate relationship between the possessor and the possessee. Grounding this in observations made on alienability splits in the typological literature, I argued that the data from Tɔ̀húgbe syntactic attributive possessive constructions support the assertion that alienability splits are motivated by conceptualized relations.

Constructions processed at the syntax/morphology interface (or simply constructed in morphology) are also constructions in which the connective does not occur. They were divided into two: suffixed possessive constructions, and compound possessive constructions. I showed that suffixed possessive constructions are correlates of juxtaposed possessive constructions; that the suffixes that occur to denote the possessor, have grammaticalized from lexical items denoting ‘father’, ‘mother’ and ‘female partner’; and that suffixed possessive constructions are processed at the interface between syntax and morphology. Compound constructions on the other hand, I demonstrated, are characterized by high tones on the possessee, and are constructed in morphology.

Predicative possessive constructions are defined as constructions in which the possessor and possessee occur in argument slots of the verb. I noted two large types of predicative possessive constructions in Tɔ̀húgbe: constructions involving copulars and constructions involving the locative predicate. I labeled the former constructions copular possessive constructions and the latter locative possessive constructions.

Copular possessive constructions involve either the possessee pronoun or the possessor suffix. When the possessee pronoun is involved, possessive meaning is centered on the possessee. When the possessor suffix is involved, possession is centered on the possessor. Also, these forms occur with other nouns to result in forms that function as attributes of the subject. I therefore distinguished between the property attributing constructions and the possessive form of the constructions. To this end, it was demonstrated that in the possessive constructions, the form in which the possessee pronoun and the possessor suffix participate are complex noun phrases while in the property attributing

constructions, the forms in which the possessor suffix participate are compounded forms.

Locative possessive constructions involve the locative predicate. However, various verbs also enter the construction to express particular relations. Thus, locative possessive constructions capture a large group of constructions which I divided into three groups: constructions involving postpositions, constructions involving adpositions and constructions involving prepositions.

Constructions involving postpositions involve five main postpositions: **así** ‘hand’ **ɲú** ‘skin’ **dòmè** ‘mid.section’ **dzí** ‘top’ **gbó** ‘vicinity’. It was observed that constructions involving **así** ‘hand’ are the most common and default locative possessive constructions. Indeed **así** has grammaticalized to express possession, to a point where verbs of transfer of possession such as **ká** ‘contact’, **sù** ‘suffice’ and **dó** ‘reach’ can replace the locative predicate so that the construction expresses inchoative possession. Constructions involving the other postpositions either need particular discursive contexts (**gbó** ‘vicinity’), or particular types of nouns in subject position (**ɲú** ‘skin’ **dòmè** ‘mid.section’ **dzí** ‘top’ **gbó** ‘vicinity’) in order to express possession. Indeed, they express specific possessive meanings.

Another type of locative possessive constructions surveyed consists of constructions that involve both prepositions and postpositions. These constructions involve quantifying verbs such as **sùgbó** ‘be.numerous’ and **bó** ‘be.abundant’. They have been analyzed as quantificational variants of locative possessive constructions involving postpositions; and they express the abundance of the possessee.

Finally, locative possessive constructions involving only prepositions were also surveyed. The prepositions that are involved in these constructions are the allative and the dative. When the constructions involve prepositions, other verbs apart from the locative predicate occur in the construction. While constructions that involve the allative express temporal possession, constructions that involve the dative express the idea that the possessor controls the possessee. Concerning this latter type of constructions, the dative-oblique triggers the possessive meaning that the constructions evoke. Dative obliques in

another type of clausal possessive construction *i.e.* external possessor constructions were the subject of chapter 5.

External possessor constructions are constructions that express the relation X's Y, but have clausal syntax. It was noted that in Tɔ̀nùgbe, external possessor constructions express essentially part-whole relations despite the variation that can occur at the structural level. Different structural types of external possessor constructions were surveyed.

The first structural type of external possessor constructions surveyed consists of constructions in which the possessee occurs as the object of the verb, and the possessor as the dependent of a dative-oblique. In these constructions, the dative-oblique can be elided when the dative-oblique possessor co-references the subject. On the other hand, the dative-oblique possessor can be replaced by a reflexive. In addition, when the verb that occurs in the construction is an experience verb, the possessee occurs in subject position while the possessor occurs in object position. These structural differences that characterize the subtypes of the constructions, I argued, correspond to subtle semantic differences. As such, when the dative-oblique is elided, the relation expressed is viewed from the point of view of the possessor; when the reflexive replaces the dative-oblique possessor, the subject possessor is construed as having played a role in the events that affect the possessee.

The second structural type of external possessor constructions consists of constructions in which the possessee is a dependent of a prepositional phrase. In this construction as well, the dative oblique can be elided when the dative-oblique possessor is the same as the subject of the construction. However, as is the case in object possessee constructions involving inherent complement verbs, the reflexive does not occur in this construction. This is because the verbs in these constructions do not entail a change of state. It was also pointed out that there are subtle distinctions in the meanings expressed by each of these structural types of constructions.

More importantly, it was observed that the conceptualized relations in the external possessor constructions are such that the possessee is

construed as independently undergoing events expressed in the verb. Thus, although body-part terms typically occur as possessees (and when other noun types occur the relation expressed is a part-whole relation), as in attributive possessive construction in which body-part terms occur in connective constructions *i.e.* constructions in which the possessor and possessee are construed as independent of each other, in external possessor constructions as well, the possessor and possessee are not in an intimate relationship.

In chapter 6, it was observed that clausal possessive constructions (predicative and external possessor), exhibit special relationships with locative and existential constructions. Thus, in this chapter, I first of all presented the existential construction, the locative constructions and the relationships that exist between both constructions. Concerning existential constructions, I noted that it has one constructional schema, and the construction expresses the idea that something exists somewhere.

Locative constructions on the other hand are much more diverse. They are grouped into two categories: basic locative constructions, and non-basic locative constructions. While the basic locative construction involves the locative predicate, non-basic locative constructions involve other predicates. Non-basic locative constructions are then sub-divided into internal non-basic locative constructions and external non-basic locative constructions, which are not concerned by the various discussions that are undertaken in the chapter.

Having described the existential and locative constructions, I then continued to examine the relationships that both constructions, on one hand, demonstrate *vis-à-vis* clausal possessive constructions (predicative possessive constructions and external possessor constructions). I showed that the relationships between the four constructions hold on two levels: relationships characterized by the locative predicate; and relationships characterized by the dative-oblique. I carefully spelt out the morpho-syntactic similarities and differences that are observable on these two levels across the four constructions and come to the conclusion that despite the observable similarities, there exists enough semantic and syntactic differences

between the constructions to warrant their being considered as independent of each other synchronically.

Although the work in this volume concerns Tɔ̀nɔ̀gbe, the findings are not without implications for other Ewe dialects. In the first place, the sketch grammar presents novel data on the Ewe language, which should enrich further discussions on Ewe, and Gbe phonology, morphology and syntax. The data should encourage a new generation of Ewe linguists who will seek to document the grammar of the various dialects of the Ewe language. It should also inspire discussions in Gbe, and should motivate various linguists working on Gbe languages to want to examine the relationships that can be identified between dialects of the various Gbe languages. Indeed, towards the end of this work, I got into contact with researchers working on other Ewe dialects (and Gbe languages); and the preliminary discussions seem to suggest that Tɔ̀nɔ̀gbe tones, demonstratives and TAM particles could have a lot in common with the categories in these other dialects (and languages), to the point where the similarity between the Tɔ̀nɔ̀gbe forms and the forms in these dialects (and languages) can be described as closer than the similarity between the Tɔ̀nɔ̀gbe forms and the forms of the Ewe dialects that are geographically closer.

The discussions on possessive constructions also make major contributions to Ewe linguistics. This work presents a detail of a range of constructions that have hitherto not been captured in the available literature (e.g. the tone features of attributive constructions, the peculiar properties of kinship terms, copular predicative possessive constructions, the localized interpretations of some of the predicative possessive constructions, the intricacies examined in external possessor constructions etc.). Indeed, even when the constructions have been captured (copular constructions involving the verb **nyé** ‘be’ and, locative possessive constructions, for instance), the above study has presented detailed aspects (the features, subtle semantic distinctions) that were not captured in the data available. This work also opens a new page for Ewe comparative syntax as it was revealed with the external possessor constructions.

Typologically, the data and analysis presented in the present volume are relevant to all aspects of linguistics. For instance, the preliminary findings of the tones of Tɔ̀nùgbe have already triggered many discussions with specialists in phonetics and phonology. The various paradigms, especially the demonstrative paradigm, have also inspired discussions with many working in typological linguistics while the TAM markers have been the subject of fruitful discussions with various members of faculties of the laboratories in which I stayed. Concerning the possessive constructions, the data and analysis presented in this volume supports the idea that the configurations of attributive possessive constructions are motivated by conceptual considerations; and that the alienability split observed in Tɔ̀nùgbe is isomorphic to conceived distance between possessor and possessee. The observations in the external possessor constructions support the view that despite the multiplicity of structures, external possessor constructions, fundamentally, express part-whole relations, and this distinguishes them from other similar constructions. Finally, although clausal possessive constructions, locative constructions and the existential construction share various morphological, syntactic, and semantic similarities, the view that is supported is that, synchronically, the different constructions are not reducible to a single structure.