Possessive constructions in Tongugbe, an Ewe dialect
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This thesis concerns the description of possessive constructions in Tɔŋúgbe, one of the many dialects of Ewe (a Kwa language), which is spoken in south-eastern Ghana, along the lower basins of the Volta River. Couched in Basic Linguistic Theory, the study presents a detailed description of several grammatical constructions and their meanings. Also, the research seeks to understand the relationship that exists between clausal possessive constructions on the one hand, and locative and existential constructions on the other. In addition to this, the work presents a first outline grammar of Tɔŋúgbe. The work is divided into six chapters.

Chapter 1 contains the sketch grammar of the dialect. This chapter offers a description of the phonetics, the morphology and the syntax of Tɔŋúgbe. Phonetically, it is observed that the vowel and consonant sounds of Tɔŋúgbe are the same as those of other Ewe dialects. Concerning the tones of Tɔŋúgbe, the duration of the mid-tone of root nouns in Tɔŋúgbe is longer than the duration of other level tones (low and high) of root nouns. On the morphological level, three processes are surveyed: reduplication, composition and affixation.

Syntactically, it is shown that the noun and verb phrase structures of Tɔŋúgbe are also the same as those in other Ewe dialects. Particular emphasis is placed on the syntactic categories of Tɔŋugbe. The categories that are surveyed are intensifiers, articles, demonstratives, tense, aspect and modal particles and adpositions. Some of the distinctive features noted for Tɔŋúgbe include the rich demonstrative paradigm and the different tense, aspect and modal markers. These characteristics suggest and affirm the status of Tɔŋúgbe as a distinct dialect of Ewe.

Chapter 2 serves as a transition chapter between the sketch grammar of Tɔŋúgbe and the study of the possessive constructions of the dialect. The chapter offers the definition of possession that is adopted in this work i.e. an umbrella notion that encapsulates three core meanings: belongingness meanings, part-whole meanings and kinship meanings. Furthermore, the chapter presents a survey of the range of possessive constructions in typology and their relationship with existential and locative constructions. The final part of this chapter presents the analytical approaches that have been adopted in accounting for this latter relationship, and the approach adopted in this work i.e. a functional approach.

Chapter 3 offers a description of attributive possessive constructions of Tɔŋúgbe. The chapter also examines the motivations that underlie the formal configurations of the different constructions. Functional concepts such as

iconicity and egocentricity are at the centre of the explanations offered. The chapter ends with an attempt to situate the constructions noted for Tɔŋúgbe within the framework of Ewe comparative grammar and linguistic typology.

Attributive possessive constructions are grouped into constructions formed in syntax and constructions either at the interface between syntax and morphology or simply in morphology. Constructions in syntax are of two types: connective constructions, and juxtaposed constructions. It is demonstrated that while connective constructions present the relationship between the possessor and possessee as not intimate, juxtaposed constructions express an intimate relationship between the possessor and the possessee. Grounding this in observations made on alienability splits in the typological literature, it is argued that the data from Tɔŋúgbe support the assertion that alienability splits are motivated by the conceptualization of relations between the entities involved.

Constructions formed at the syntax/morphology interface (or simply in morphology) do not involve the connective. They are divided into two: suffixed possessive constructions, and compound possessive constructions. Suffixed possessive constructions are correlates of juxtaposed possessive constructions; and they are at the interface between syntax and morphology. Compound constructions on the other hand are characterized by high tones on the possessee, and are constructed in morphology.

Chapter 4 describes the predicative possessive constructions of Tɔŋúgbe. The chapter distinguishes between predicative possessive constructions and other constructions that are structurally similar. The chapter ends with a study of the predicative possessive constructions of Tɔŋúgbe in relation to the predicative possessive constructions of other Ewe dialects.

The chapter identifies two main construction types: copular possessive constructions and 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. To distinguish these constructions from similar constructions which do not express possession, it is demonstrated that in the possessive constructions, the forms in which the possessee pronoun and the possessor suffix participate are complex noun phrases while in the non-possessive constructions, the forms in which the possessor suffix participates a r e compound forms.

Locative possessive constructions are divided into three groups: constructions involving postpositions, constructions involving adpositions and constructions involving prepositions. Constructions involving postpositions make use of five main postpositions: **así** 'hand' **ŋú** 'skin' **dòmè** 'mid.section' **dzí** 'top' **gbɔ**   'vicinity'. It is observed that constructions involving **así** 'hand' are the most common; and that when **así** occurs, verbs of transfer of possession such as **ká** 'contact', **sù** 'suffice' and **ɖó** 'reach' can replace the locative predicate so that the construction expresses inchoative possession. Constructions involving the other postpositions either need particular discursive contexts or particular types of nouns in subject position in order to express possession. Another type of locative possessive constructions surveyed is those in which both prepositions and postpositions participate. Finally, locative possessive constructions involving only prepositions – the allative and the dative– are also surveyed.

Chapter 5 studies the external possessor constructions of Tɔŋúgbe. The chapter first of all describes the structural types of external possessor constructions in the language. It then continues to present the meanings that are expressed by each of the structural types of external possessor constructions. It also examines the conceptual relationships that are inherent in the meanings expressed by the different structural types of external possessor constructions; and discusses the implications of the findings for comparative Ewe syntax.

Tɔŋúgbe external possessor constructions express essentially part- whole relations despite structural variations. The first structural type is 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 correspond to subtle semantic differences.

The second structural type is 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 obligatory complement taking 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 is also pointed out that there are subtle distinctions in the meanings expressed by each of these structural types of constructions. The conceptualized relations in the external possessor constructions are such that the possessee is construed as independently undergoing events expressed in the verb.

The final chapter, Chapter 6, is devoted to the relationship between clausal possessive constructions and locative and existential constructions. I first of all explicate the existential construction in Tɔŋúgbe as a construction which expresses the idea that a figure is located somewhere. I then continue to present the locative constructions. Finally, I examine the relationship between possessive constructions, the existential constructions and locative constructions.

Locative constructions are grouped into two categories: basic locative construction, 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 and external constructions.

The relationships between the clausal possessive constructions, locative constructions and the existential construction are analyzed as holding on two levels: relationships characterized by the locative predicate; and relationships characterized by the dative-oblique. I spell out the morpho-syntactic similarities and differences that are observable on these two levels across the 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.