

The Definiteness Effect and a New Classification of Possessive Constructions

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Abstract

In this paper, we argue that the occurrence of the definiteness effect in possessive constructions is predictable once we know what type of interpretation is obtained in the construction. Previous studies concerned with this issue have generally assumed that there is a strong correlation between the effect and the notion of inalienability expressed by the object. We argue, however, that this is not true. Rather, what we need to take into consideration is the interpretation of the construction as a whole, and by doing so, we can provide a unified explanation of the distribution of the effect in possessive constructions both in English and Japanese. We propose that the readings of possessive constructions should be divided into “possessive” interpretation and “holding” interpretation. Secondly, we argue that English *have* is polysemous and has a control reading, while the Japanese verbs *iru* (‘be’) and *aru* (‘be’) cannot express the control relation. Thirdly, we argue that the definiteness effect in *there* constructions is different from that in possessive constructions in terms of information structure. Fourthly, we argue that there are two more possessive constructions in Japanese in addition to possessive constructions using *iru* (‘be’) and *aru* (‘be’), and that they are all related to typological patterns of possessive constructions.

1 Introduction: The definiteness effect and inalienability

It has apparently been accepted that there is a strong correlation between the definiteness effect observed in English possessive constructions and inalienable possession expressed by the object of *have* (de Jong 1987, Keenan 1987, Partee 1999).

When inalienable possession is expressed by using a relational noun such as *sister*, which implies that the possessee is conceived of typically as being inseparable from the possessor, the definiteness effect arises, which can be found in (1).

(1) John has a/*the sister.

By contrast, the effect does not seem to be relevant to alienable possession denoted by the object. In the following examples, in which a nonrelational noun is used as an object expressing alienable possession, the effect does not arise.

(2) John has a/the book.

These kinds of facts lead many researchers to formulate that the definiteness effect in English possessive constructions is due to inalienability.

However, this issue would seem to require further consideration. The following example, for example, cannot be accounted for by the previous studies, since the effect does arise even when a nonrelational noun is used as the object.

(3) Q. What will you give to Eliza for her birthday?
A. Eliza has a/*the mirror, so I won't give one to her.

In this dialogue, where Eliza's ownership of a mirror is in question, the addressee must use an indefinite object rather than a definite one.

Also, there is another sense in which most previous works still come short of accounting for the definiteness effect in possessive constructions. For instance, in some cases the effect does not arise even when relational nouns are used as objects, as can be seen in (4).

(4) John has his sister as a dance partner.

In (4), the object noun phrase includes a relational noun *sister*. According to the previous studies, a relational noun is supposed to be a crucial factor in determining the occurrence of the definiteness effect. However, contrary to their expectations, the effect does not arise here.

These facts given in (3A) and (4) should be problems for any previous approaches, where the definiteness effect in possessive constructions is assumed to be due to the notion of inalienable possession. In other words, this allows

us to predict that the effect should not be relevant to the conceptual distinction between inalienable and alienable possession described by the object in the first place.

In order to identify the definiteness effect of the verb *have* (henceforth, we will abbreviate the effect as “DE”), a new classification will be proposed based on its readings. This new classification is very useful to account for the DE in possessive constructions both in English and Japanese.

This paper is organized as follows. In Section 2, we show that the occurrence of the DE in possessive constructions is NOT predictable from the inalienability of the object noun phrases only. Rather, we claim that it depends on the way in which the possessive construction is interpreted. In Section 3, we point out the differences between English *have* and Japanese verbs *iru* (‘be’) and *aru* (‘be’). More precisely, the Japanese verbs cannot encode a specific possessive relation, which is available only in English possessive constructions. In Section 4, we argue that the DE in *there* constructions and possessive constructions cannot be accounted for from the same perspective. In Section 5, we point out that there are other possessive constructions in Japanese in addition to possessive constructions with *iru* (‘be’) and *aru* (‘be’). We argue that they are all related to the main typological patterns of possessive constructions Stassen 2009 claims.

2 English and Japanese possessive constructions

As was suggested in section 1, the DE in English possessive constructions does not have a strong relation to the inalienability expressed by the object. Moreover, this is not a peculiar fact about English. Rather, it is at least a cross-linguistic fact. The same problem holds for Japanese possessive constructions. That is, the occurrence of the DE has nothing to do with inalienability described by the object.

2.1 Subjecthood

In Japanese possessive constructions, stative predicates *iru* (‘be’) and *aru* (‘be’) are used. These verbs take a subject with dative case and an object with nominative case, which is shown in (5a). Note that the same case pattern (-DAT + -NOM + *iru/aru* (‘be’)) is found when a locational or an existential meaning is encoded as in (5b).

- (5) (a) *Kanojo-ni-wa ootoo-gai ru.*
 she-DAT-TOP brother-NOM be
 ‘She has a brother.’
- (b) *Kooen-ni kodomo-ga iru.*
 The park-DAT child/children-NOM be
 ‘There is a child in the park./There are children in the park.’

Although both sentences in (5a) and (5b) take the same case pattern (-DAT -NOM), the grammatical relation that the nominative phrase assumes is different (Kishimoto 2000, 2005). As Kishimoto argues, there are four diagnostic methods for identifying grammatical subjects in Japanese possessive constructions.

One of the tests for identifying a grammatical subject is reflexivization. The Japanese reflexive *zibun* (‘self’) can only take a subject as its antecedent. The contrast between (6a) and (6b) shows that the antecedent of *zibun* (‘self’) is a dative phrase but not a nominative phrase:

- (6) (a) *John_i-ni zibun_i-no kodomo-ga i-ru/a-ru (koto)*
 John-DAT self-GEN child-NOM be (thing)
 ‘John has his own child.’
- (b) **Zibun_i-no tomodati-ni kodomo_i-ga i-ru/a-ru (koto)*
 self-GEN friend-DAT child-NOM be (thing)
 ‘A friend of his_i has a child_i.’ (Kishimoto 2005:169)

There is another test for identifying which phrase in the construction is the grammatical subject. We can identify the subject by checking the distribution of controlled PRO.

- (7) (a) *Watasi-wa John_i-ni [PRO_i kodomo-ga atte] hosii to*
 I-TOP John_i-DAT child-NOM be want that
omotta.
 thought
 ‘I wanted John to have a child.’
- (b) **Watasi-wa kodomo_i-ni [John-ni PRO_i atte] hosii to*
 I-TOP child-DAT John-DAT be want that
omotta.
 thought
 ‘I wanted a child_i for John to have PRO_i.’ (Kishimoto 2005:170)

The null element PRO in the acceptable example in (7a) is coindexed with the dative phrase *John*. When PRO is coindexed with the nominative phrase *kodomo-ga* in (7b), on the other hand, the example is unacceptable.

In addition to controlled PRO, there is another type of PRO which is not controlled and has arbitrary reference. This is so-called arbitrary PRO. Arbitrary PRO is also limited to subject position.

- (8) (a) [*PRO kodomo-ga aru/iru*] *koto-wa ii koto da.*
 child-NOM be that-TOP good thing COP
 ‘It is a good thing to have a child.’
- (b) *[*John-ni PRO aru/iru*] *koto-wa ii koto da.*
 John-DAT be that-TOP good thing COP
 ‘It is a good thing for John to have PRO.’ (Kishimoto 2005:171)

Irrespective of which verb, *aru* (‘be’) or *iru* (‘be’), is used, the dative phrase can have an arbitrary PRO interpretation as shown in the example in (8a), while the example in (8b) shows that the nominative phrase cannot have such an arbitrary interpretation. There is a fourth diagnostic for identifying grammatical subjects in Japanese possessive constructions. Subject honorification is used to express the speaker’s respect toward the grammatical subject with a particular marking on the verb. In (9), the speaker pays deference towards the referent of the dative phrase *Yamada-sensei* (‘Prof. Yamada’), but not towards the referent of the nominative phrase *zaisan* (‘fortune’).

- (9) *Yamada-sensei-ni zaisan-ga o-ari-ni-naru.*
 Yamada-Prof.-DAT fortune-NOM be-HON
 ‘Prof. Yamada has a fortune.’ (Kishimoto 2000:57)

Therefore, these facts suggest that the subject of the verb *aru* (‘be’) and *iru* (‘be’) in possessive constructions is a dative phrase not a nominative phrase.

2.2 The DE and the interpretation of the possessive construction

When a relational noun is used as the object in Japanese possessive constructions, some cases display the DE. As is observed in (10), the object nominative phrase *otooto-ga* (‘brother-NOM’) is incompatible with strong determiners including the definite article.

- (10) #*Kanojo-ni-wa {sono/arayuru/hotondo-no/subete-no}*
 she-DAT-TOP {the/every/most-GEN/all-GEN}
otooto-ga iru.
 brother(s) be
 ‘She has the/every/most-GEN/all-GEN brother(s).’

By contrast, the following case does not exhibit the DE although a relational noun is used as the object.

- (11) *John-ni-wa Mary-no otooto-ga iru.*
 John-DAT-TOP Mary-GEN brother-NOM be
 ‘John has Mary’s brother (in some role/for some purpose).’

The sentence in (11) does not describe John’s sibling relationship. Rather, the relation between *John* and *otooto* is contextually dependent. For example, *otooto* could be just John’s helper.

The same holds for nonrelational objects. The DE does not usually arise when a nonrelational noun *hon* (‘book’) is used as the object, as in (12).

- (12) *John-ni-wa ano hon-ga aru.*
 John-DAT-TOP that book-NOM be
 ‘John has that book.’

However, the DE can arise even when a nonrelational noun is used as the object of *iru* (‘be’) and *aru* (‘be’). The object phrase *okane* (‘money’), which is a nonrelational noun, is compatible with the weak determiners *takusan-no* (‘plenty of-GEN’), *ikuraka-no* (‘some-GEN’) as (13a) shows, but it is incompatible with strong determiners, which is observed in the examples in (13b).

- (13) (a) *Kanojo-ni-wa {takusan-no/ikuraka-no} okane-ga aru.*
 she-DAT-TOP {plenty of-GEN/some-GEN} money-NOM be
 ‘She has {plenty of/some} money.’
 (b) #*Kanojo-ni-wa {sono/arayuru/hotondo-no/subete-no/kanojo-no}*
 she-DAT-TOP {the/every/most-GEN/all-GEN/she-GEN}
okane-ga aru.
 money-NOM be
 ‘She has {the/every/most/all/her} money.’

On the basis of these examples, we claim that the previous studies, in which the DE is dependent upon the inalienability of the object, are not entirely on the right track.

Now, we are arguing against the previous works, proposing that the DE must be accounted for in terms of the interpretation of the possessive constructions independent of the inalienability of the object. Specifically, we postulate that there are two different interpretations, the “possessive” interpretation and the “holding” interpretation. To make these interpretations clear, first consider the following case.

(14) John has a wife of his own.

The sentence in (14) includes a relational noun. The example expresses an inherent property attributed to the subject. We call this kind of interpretation a “possessive” interpretation. It should be noted here that this interpretation can also be obtained by using a nonrelational noun expressing alienable possession as in (15):

(15) Eliza has a car.

The utterance in (15) can typically mean that Eliza is the owner of a car. The car belonging to her can be treated as her property. That is, the example (15) can be assumed to have a “possessive” interpretation.

On the other hand, the following acceptable examples (16) and (17), where the second conjunct can negate the implication conveyed in the first conjunct, show what the “holding” interpretation is. They describe that the subject can avail herself of the object but cannot claim ownership to it, which Heine (1997) calls temporary possession. Again, this interpretation can be obtained using both a relational and a nonrelational noun expressing inalienable and alienable possession respectively.

(16) Eliza has a mirror, but it doesn't belong to her. (nonrelational noun)

(17) Ann has a sister as her secretary, but she doesn't have a sister of her own. (relational noun)

The occurrence of the DE can be well predicted if we take these interpretations into consideration. The DE arises when a “possessive” interpretation is obtained, while it does not when a “holding” one is obtained:

- (18) *John has the sister (of his own).
 (19) Q. What will you give to Eliza for her birthday?
 A. Eliza has a/*the mirror, so I won't give one to her.

The sentences in (18) and (19A) obtain a possessive interpretation. Note that in these examples, both relational and nonrelational nouns are used as the objects. The DE arises when the possessive interpretation is obtained, irrespective of the type of object noun phrases. By contrast, the acceptable sentences in (20A) and (21) obtain a holding interpretation. They display no definiteness effect.

- (20) Q. What can I use to hold these papers down?
 A. Eliza has a/the/John's mirror. (But it's not hers.)
 (21) Anne has Bill's sister as secretary.

Also, in these sentences, relational as well as nonrelational nouns are used as the objects. In the traditional view, it is an inalienability described by an object that causes the DE in possessive constructions. It is clear, then, that the distinction inalienable vs. alienable possession only is inadequate as a means of accounting for the distribution of the DE in possessive constructions. The DE must be accounted for in terms of the interpretation of the construction in question.

3 Subclassification of the “holding” interpretation in terms of information structure

When English possessive constructions do not display the DE, i. e., when they have a “holding” interpretation, the senses of *have* are assumed to be polysemous. Tham (2006) argues that the meaning of *have* can be distinguished based on the informational status of the object. In this section, we follow Tham's suggestion to set up a subclassification of the “holding” interpretation in a possessive construction.

When the object conveys new, focus information for the addressee, the English possessive construction is assumed to be focal and “presentational”:

- (22) Q: Who can help John?
A: He has Sally.
- (23) A: We need more trimmings for the tree.
B: The tree has all those lights we got last year. (Tham 2006:145)

When both sentences in (22A) and (23B) are uttered in response to the preceding questions (22Q) and (23A) respectively, the definite object *Sally* in (22A) and *all those lights we got last year* in (23B) convey the new focus information for the hearer. We will call the interpretation obtained here the focus (presentational) reading.

It should be noted that the sentences in (22A) and (23B) do not concretely specify a holding relation between the entities of the subject and the object; the relation between them is contextually dependent.

In contrast, when the object carries old, presuppositional information, the construction acquires a typical sense of holding meaning, which is attributable to the verbal interpretation of *have*. We will call this reading a nonfocal, “control” reading. Consider the following case in (24):

- (24) Q: Where is my umbrella?
A: John has it.

In (24A), the pronoun *it* refers to an entity already familiar from the previous discourse. And the sentence maintains a typical holding interpretation.

It should be noted here that the subject of *have*, in the control sense, must be animate. On the one hand, the focus reading allows for an inanimate subject. As we have shown earlier, the context in (23) makes the object of *have* in (23B) new information. In this case, the object in (23B) is compatible with the inanimate subject *the tree*. On the other hand, the subject must be animate when the control reading is obtained. The utterance in (25a), for example, sets up the context so that the object in (25b) is old information for addressee. The reply (25b), therefore, is not felicitous.

- (25) (a) Where are the mirrors?
 (b) #The bathroom has them.
 (ok They are in the bathroom.)
 (ok Mowgli has them.) (Tham 2006:144)

In this connection, we call attention to the fact that a cross-linguistic contrast can be observed with respect to the “holding” *have*: In Japanese possessive constructions, the definite object is felicitous only when it conveys new information, which is shown by the example (27A). Unlike English possessive constructions, the control reading is not available in Japanese possessive constructions, as in (29A) (cf. Tham (2006) about Chinese).

- (26) Q: Who can help John?
 A: He has Sally/that man.
- (27) Q: *Dare-ga John-o tetsudau koto-ga dekiru no?*
 who-NOM John-ACC help thing-NOM can Q
 ‘Who can help John?’
 A: *John-ni-wa {Mary/ano ojisan}-ga i-ru.*
 John-DAT-TOP {Mary/that man}-NOM be
 ‘John has {Mary/that man}.’ (cf. Kishimoto 2005)
- (28) Q: Where is my umbrella?
 A: John has it.
- (29) Q: *Watasi-no kasa doko-ni a-ru no?*
 My umbrella where be Q
 ‘Where is my umbrella?’
 A: **John-ni (sono kasa-ga) a-ru.*
 John-DAT (the umbrella-NOM) be
 ‘John has it.’

There are languages in which the objects are not allowed to bear old information when the DE does not arise. According to Tham (2005, 2006), an example of such a language is Mandarin. To make this concrete, compare the question-answer pairs in (30) and (31).

- (30) Q. *Sanmao ca shenme dongxi?*
 Sanmao wipe what thing

‘What is Sanmao wiping/polishing?’

A. *Sanmao you na xie jingzi.*

Sanmao have that some mirror

‘Sanmao has those mirrors.’

(Tham 2006:146)

(31) Q. *Na xie jingzi zai nar ne?*

That PL mirror be at where Q-PRT

‘Where are those mirrors?’

A. *#Sanmao you (na xie jingzi).*

Sanmao have that some mirror

‘Sanmao has those mirrors.’

(Tham 2006:146)

4 Differences between the DE in possessive constructions and the DE in *there* constructions

There constructions are known to be used for information structural purposes, i. e., the post-verbal noun phrase conveys new, focus information for the addressee. It is commonly agreed in the literature that *there* constructions can be used to introduce hearer new entities (cf. Abbott 1992, 1993). That is, it is generally anomalous to assert the existence of an entity presumed to be familiar for the addressee. Thus, naturally enough, noun phrases with determiners such as *the, every, both, most*, as well as proper names and pronouns, are excluded from the post-verbal positions in *there* constructions, hence an unacceptable sentence **There are the candidates for the job*. Even in *there* constructions with a list interpretation, where post-verbal noun phrases are definite, the definite phrases should not be used anaphorically. In this sense, *there* constructions with a list-reading as well as ‘normal’ *there* constructions (with a non list reading) are felicitous as long as post-verbal noun phrases convey new information for the hearer. In other words, the DE in the *there* construction is attributed to its presentational function.

In possessive constructions both in English and Japanese, on the other hand, there is not such a restriction on the information structure of the objects, when the constructions show the DE. That is, the objects can convey old information as well as new. Observe the following examples:

- (32) Q: Is John married?
 A: He has a beautiful wife.
 (cf. It is a beautiful wife that John has.)

The utterance in (32A), where the object *a beautiful wife* conveys new information, is a felicitous response to the question in (32Q).

On the other hand, the objects in English possessive constructions can also express old information:

- (33) Q: Who has a wife/lover?
 A: John has a wife/lover.
 (cf. It is John who has a wife.)

The question in (33Q) sets up a context in which the subject *John* in the felicitous response (33A) is focused, while the object *a wife* or *a lover* is presupposed.

It should be noted that the same explanation can be applied to the objects in Japanese possessive constructions:

- (34) (a) *John-ni-wa ootoo-ga i-ru.*
 John-DAT-TOP brother-NOM be
 ‘John has a brother.’
 (b) *John-ni i-ru no wa ootoo dake da.*
 John-DAT be that-TOP brother only COP
 ‘It is only a brother that John has.’
 (c) *Ootoo-ga i-ru no wa John da.*
 brother-NOM be that-TOP John COP
 ‘It is John who has a brother.’ (Kishimoto 2005:228-229)

As the sentences in (34b) and (34c) illustrate, not only *otooto* (‘brother’) in the object position in (34a) but also *John* in the dative subject position in (34a) can appear in the focus position of the pseudo-cleft constructions. Thus, the objects in Japanese possessive constructions also do not have to bear new information; they can also express old information for the addressee.

In sum, the DE in *there* constructions and in English and Japanese possessive constructions cannot be accounted for from the same perspective. The DE in *there* constructions is accounted for in terms of the presentational function. By contrast, the objects of possessive constructions both in English and Japanese do

not have to convey new information; the information structure of the objects is underspecified.

5 Varieties of possessive constructions in Japanese

In what follows, we point out that there seem to be several competing possessive constructions besides possessive constructions with *iru* ('be') and *aru* ('be') in Japanese. We argue that they are all related to main typological patterns of possessive constructions Stassen (2009) claims.

5.1 'Eel' constructions in Japanese as a focus reading

In this section, we claim that so-called 'eel' constructions, which are allegedly peculiar to Japanese, are another sort of possessive constructions Japanese possesses, corresponding to the English possessive constructions with a focus reading.

To recapitulate a focus reading and a control (nonfocal) reading, which are subclasses of a holding interpretation, let us first look at the following contrast. The sentences in (35aA) and (35bA) obtain a focus reading, while the sentence in (36A) receives a control reading:

- (35) (a) Q. Which group are you taking around?
A. I have the old ladies. (But I can't seem to find them.)
(b) Q. Who is taking which group around?
A. I have the old ladies. (But I can't seem to find them.)
- (36) Q. Where are the old ladies?
A. I have them. (#But I can't seem to find them.)

As we have examined earlier, the Japanese verbs *iru* ('be') and *aru* ('be'), originally existential verbs *BE*, can be used when a focus reading is received (cf. (27A)). Even when a focus reading is obtained, however, the verbs *iru* ('be') and *aru* ('be') are not always available. As shown in (37aA) and (37bA), a special construction seems to be used in some cases:

- (37) (a) Q. *Kimi-wa dono guruupu-wo tsurete iru no?*
you-TOP which group-ACC take Q
'Which group are you taking around?'

- A. *Watashi-wa obaasantachi da.*
 I-TOP old ladies COP
 ‘I am taking around the old ladies.’
- A’ **Watashi-ni-wa obaasantachi-ga iru.*
 I-DAT-TOP old ladies-NOM be.pres
 ‘I am taking around the old ladies.’
- (b) Q. *Dare-ga dono guruupu-wo tsurete iru no?*
 who-NOM which group-ACC take Q
 ‘Who is taking which group around?’
- A. *Watashi-wa obaasantachi da.*
 I-TOP old ladies COP
 ‘I am taking around the old ladies.’
- A’ **Watashi-ni-wa obaasantachi-ga iru.*
 I-DAT-TOP old ladies-NOM be.pres
 ‘I am taking around the old ladies.’

The sentence (37aA) and the sentence (37bA) are so-called ‘eel’ constructions in Japanese, which are said to be fairly peculiar to Japanese (cf. Okutsu 1978). ‘Eel’ constructions contain the copular verb *-da*, which is different from *iru* (‘be’) and *aru* (‘be’). The copular verb *-da* in this construction appears in place of other semantically specific verbs. Suppose that you are in a Japanese restaurant and call a waitress to order a delicious grilled eel and rice. You will give your order with the following words:

- (38) *Boku-wa unagi da.*
 I-TOP eel COP
 ‘What I want to eat is an eel./I’ll have/take an eel.’

The copular verb *-da* in this construction is a shortened substitute for all possible specific verbs (*taberu* (‘to eat/to have’), *chuumonsuru* (‘to order’), etc.). For a felicitous use, some sort of “pair-list” reading with the contrastive topic is necessary.

5.2 Varieties of Japanese possessive constructions and their typological status

So far, we have suggested two varieties of the possessive constructions in Japanese: the one with the originally existential verbs *aru* (‘be’) and *iru* (‘be’) and the other

with the copular verb *-da* (COP). In this section, we suggest another possessive construction in Japanese based on the continuative form of the verb *mot-* ('take,' 'hold': TAKE).

In the following possessive constructions with *mot-* ('take,' 'hold') (39)–(40), a possessive interpretation is intended, because each example expresses an inherent property attributed to the subject. As is illustrated in (39) and (40), under a possessive interpretation, nonrelational nouns, but not relational nouns can be used in the object position. It should be noted here that this construction is acceptable only if the subject is animate and the object is inanimate.

- (39) (a) *Watasi-wa {ie/kaisha}-o mot-teiru.*
 I-TOP {house/company}-ACC take-CONT
 'I have a house/company.' (nonrelational, inanimate)
- (b) **Watasi-wa untenshu-o mot-teiru.*
 I-TOP driver-ACC take-CONT.
 'I have a chauffeur.' (nonrelational, animate)
- (40) (a) **Watasi-wa 8-gatsu-ni tanjoobi-o mot-teiru.*
 I-TOP August-DAT birthday-ACC take-CONT
 'My birthday is August.' (relational, inanimate)
- (b) *Watasi-wa {*imooto/??musuko}-o mot-teiru.*
 I-TOP {sister/son}-ACC take-CONT
 'I have a sister/son.' (relational, animate)

Also, the animacy restriction of this kind holds for the object of possessive constructions with *mot-* ('take,' 'hold') when a focus reading is received:

- (41) Q: *Watashi-ni-wa nani-ga aru no?*
 I-DAT-TOP what-NOM be Q
 'What (on earth) do I have?'
 A. *Kimi-wa daiteitaku-o mot-teiru.*
 you-TOP villa-ACC take-CONT
 'You have a villa.'
- (42) Q: *Dare-ga John-o tetsudau koto-ga dekiru no?*
 who-NOM John-ACC help thing-NOM can Q
 'Who can help John?'

- A: **John-wa {Mary/ano ojisan}-o mot-teiru.*
 John-TOP {Mary/that man}-ACC take-CONT
 ‘John has Mary/that man.’
- (43) A. *Sono ki-ni-wa mou sukoshi kazari-ga iru ne.*
 the tree-DAT-TOP a little more trimmings-NOM need PRT
 ‘We need more trimmings for this tree.’
- B. **Kono ki-wa kyonen katta denkyu-o mot-teiru yo.*
 this tree-TOP last year bought light-NOM take-CONT PRT
 ‘The tree has all those lights we got last year.’

Moreover, the same restriction can be found in a control reading, which is received when the object conveys old information:

- (44) Q. *Dare-ga Chomsky-no hon-o mot-teiru no?*
 who-NOM Chomsky’s book-ACC take-CONT Q
 ‘Who is holding the Chomsky book?’
- A. *John-ga Chomsky-no hon-o mot-teiru.*
 John-NOM Chomsky’s book-ACC take-CONT.pres
 ‘John is holding the Chomsky book.’
- (45) Q. *Dare-ga obaasantachi-o tsure-teiru no?*
 who-NOM old ladies-ACC take-CONT Q
 ‘Who’s taking the old ladies?’
- A. **Jane-ga obaasantachi-o mot-teiru.*
 Jane-NOM old ladies-ACC take-CONT.pres
 ‘Jane has them.’

In sum, there are three kinds of possessive constructions in Japanese: possessive constructions with the verb BE, ‘eel’ constructions with the copular verb *-da*, and possessive construction with the verb *mot-teiru* (‘take’). This indicates that a natural language may have plural strategies to express the notion of possession. In this connection, Stassen (2009) has newly proposed a typology of possessive constructions. His classification with four major classes is introduced in (46). Japanese possessive construction with BE roughly corresponds to (46a), whereas the construction with the transitive verb *mot-teiru* can be related to constructions with transitive *have* (46d). ‘Eel’ constructions with the copular verb *-da* are compared with (46b).

- (46) (a) The locational possessive: Korean
(b) The topic (or double subject) possessive: Highland Chontal
(Tequistlatecan)
(c) The *with* possessive: Bari (Nilo-Saharan, Nilotic)
(d) The *have* possessive: Miskito (Chibchan in Nicaragua)
(e) minors (genitive, adjectival, conjunctive, ...)

6 Concluding remarks

In this paper, we firstly argued that every instance of contexts in which the DE is found in possessive constructions is attributed to the possessive interpretation of the construction, and not to the inalienability expressed by the object. The explanation in terms of a new classification of interpretations is adequate enough to account for the DE in possessive constructions both in English and Japanese.

Secondly, we argued that the approach in terms of information structure makes it clear that there is a difference between English and Japanese possessive constructions. Put differently, only English *have* allows possessive constructions to have a control reading. The Japanese verbs *iru* ('be') and *aru* ('be'), however, cannot license the old or presupposed object.

Thirdly, the DE in *there* constructions and in possessive constructions both in English and Japanese differ from one another in that the former comes from the presentational function of *there* constructions and the latter, by contrast, cannot be attributed to a restriction on the information structure of the object.

Finally, we have argued that there are at least three different possessive constructions in Japanese, namely, possessive constructions with *iru* ('be') and *aru* ('be'), 'eel' constructions with the copular verb *-da* and possessive constructions with the verb *mot-teiru* ('take'). We have argued that they are all related to typological patterns of possessive constructions.

In sum, we have proposed a "verbal solution" with respect to the DE phenomena in the object position of the verb *have*. This is contrasted to the traditional "nominal solutions," which are based on the distinction of the object head noun in its inalienability or relationality. However, the latter need not be rejected in our verbal solution. Whereas the strong theory in the verbal solution means that the verbal meaning alone ("possession" vs. "holding") decides on the existence of DE on the object irrespective of the argument structure of the object NP, the

weak theory may well concede that its argument structure plays a part depending on the verbal meaning. We have argued that the meaning of the verb is settled first in the given context, which then determines the argument structure of the object NP. Therefore, the VP level is inevitably involved in this theory (on its grammatical part).

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