Possessor Raising in Nuu-chah-nulth*

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Issue:
Nuu-chah-nulth (hereafter denoted as NCN) exhibits a construction whereby the possessive clitic -uk/-ak/-at appears on the predicate rather than in its base position on the head noun of a possessed phrase.

Questions:
- How do the structures of the two grammatical possessive constructions differ, and what evidence shows this?
- What can these teach us about the wider grammatical structure of NCN?

I. Overview of possessive constructions

A. Non-raised possession

1. One way NCN marks possession is through a clitic attached to the possessum: -uk or -(//)ak for alienable¹ possession or

Possessive agreement paradigm:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>/-uk/-at-qs</td>
<td>/-uk/-at-qin</td>
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<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>/-uk/-at-/itk</td>
<td>/-uk/-at-/itqusu</td>
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<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>/-uk/-at-0</td>
<td>/-uk/-at-0-(/i(/al))/³</td>
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2. NCN attaches this clitic plus agreement to the first word of the possessive phrase, in which normal word order is possessem (PSM) followed by possessor (PSR). (Rose, Davidson, Braithwaite) This is the only possible word order where ambiguity is possible.

(1) a. niCa - nose b. niCa/atqs - my nose⁴
   nose  nose - INAL-LS
(2) a. house b. Rachel’s house c. Rachel’s new house
   maHTii maHTii/-ak/-i R. cluuk-uk/-i maHTii R.
   house   house-POSS-DET R.   new-POSS-DET house R.
(3) a. Sam’s friend/relative
   /uSHyums-uk/-i Sam
   friend- POSS-DET Sam
b. Sam’s friend/relative’s father
   maHTiiqps-ak/-i /uSHyums-uk/-i Sam
   father- POSS-DET friend- POSS-DET Sam

¹ Phonological and morphological evidence shows that the possessive and durative morphemes are different although often homophonous. Compare:

a. witzq-ak
   ugly- DUR
   It is ugly/poor work

b. witzq-ak/lS
   ugly- POSS-1.S
   His/hers is ugly/poor work.

² Note that /-at/ is also the passive marker. Whether these are homophones or a single morpheme remains unresolved as of this writing.

³ Agreement on 3Plural is optional. (R. Wojdak, pc)

⁴ See key to glosses page 8.
c. *Sam’s father’s friend/relative*
   
   
   
   /uSHymi -uk/i NuWiqiqs -ak/i Sam
   
   friend-POSS-DET father-POSS-DET Sam

(4)  

a.  *Adam threw Henry’s rock.*
   
   
   
   /Tij izit/is Adam Muks/i/ak/i Henry
   
   throw-PST-3.IND Adam rock/stone-POSS-DET Henry

b.  # /Tij izit/is Adam Henry Muks/i/ak/i

-MJD: “I’d know what you were trying to say, but if you have Henry before Muks/i/ak/i, it sounds like he [Adam] threw Henry.”

Where the PSR and PSM are clear, phrasal word order is flexible.

(5)  

a.  *John’s teacher is a canoe-maker.*
   
   
   
   /j apacrma?ukviS tiijaak/i John
   
   Japac-ma?uk-/iS tiija-/ak-/i John
canoe-maker.of-3.IND teacher-POSS-DET John

b.  /j apacrma?ukviS John tiijaak/i

3. Possessed phrases can be in unrestricted sentence position.

(6)  

a.  *Mary sees Sue’s father.*
   
   
   
   /naatsij iz/iS Mary NuWiqiqsak/i Sue
   
   see-PERF-3.IND Mary father-POSS-DET Sue

b.  *Sue’s father sees Mary.*
   
   
   
   /naatsij iz/iS NuWiqiqsak/i Sue Mary
   
   see-PERF-3.IND father-POSS-DET Sue Mary

B. **Possessor Raising**

1. Sentences or phrases in which a possessum has the thematic role of the subject can alternatively be expressed with the possessive marker on the predicate\(^5\) instead of or in addition to on the possessor.

(7)  

a.  *John’s canoe holds lots.*
   
   
   
   /ayaqs/is j apacruk/i John
   
   /aya-qs -uk/is Japac-uk -/i John
   
   lots -in.a.vessel-3.IND canoe-POSS-DET John

b.  *John’s canoe holds lots.*
   
   
   
   /ayaqsuk/is John j apacr
   
   /aya-qs -uk/is John Japac
   
   lots -in.a.vessel-POSS-3.IND John canoe

2. The subject inflection of the predicate, evident in the person/number of the final mood marker, matches the possessor in cases of possessor raising (PR). This agreement normally corresponds to the sentence’s subject. (Wojdak 2004, Davidson 2002, Rose 1981)

Possessive marked on the argument:

(8)  

a.  *My cat is lazy.*
   
   
   
   /wiiwiS/aqz/is piiSpiSukqs
   
   redup-lazy-3.IND cat -POSS-1.S

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\(^{5}\) In cases where the main predicate is not the host of the particular clausal subject-agreement encitics, the possessive marker may also appear on e.g. relative pronoun.
Possessive marked on the predicate:

b. *My cat is lazy.*
   
   -wiwi/SaqzukS piSpiS
   R -wiwi/Saqz-uk -siS piSpiS
   redup-lazy-POSS -1S.IND cat

3. Raising is only possible where the possessive marker originates from a subject, including the derived subject of a passivized sentence.

   (9) a. *Adam threw his (own) rock.*
   Tij iz/iS Adam Muks/i/ak/i
   Tij iz/-iS Adam Muks/-/ak/-i
   throw-3.IND Adam rock-POSS-DET

b. *Adam threw his (own) rock.*
   # Tij izuk/iS Muks/i Adam
   Tij iz-uk/-iS Muks/-/ak/-i
   throw-POSS-3.IND rock Adam

4. Raised and non-raised possessive constructions are thematic paraphrases; in meaning they are more or less synonymous. Speakers differ on the allowability of possessor doubling, below. This may show a difference that is as yet undescribed.

   (10) a. *The doctor’s car is ugly.*
   witq/iS huupukvasuk/i /uStaqyu/i
   witq-uk -/iS huupukvas /uStaqyu-/i
   ugly-POSS-3.IND car doctor -DET

b. *The doctor’s car is ugly.*
   witq/uk/iS huupukvas /uStaqyu/i
   witq-uk -/iS huupukvas /uStaqyu-/i
   ugly-POSS-3.IND car doctor -DET

5. The possessor and possessum are no longer a unified constituent where raising has occurred.

   • The PSM and PSR form constituents in the non-raised construction. In 11a-b, their order can be reversed, but another element cannot be inserted between them. (11c)

   (11) a. *Florence’s teacher wants to make a canoe.*
   /ukviil maHa/iS Florence tiij ak/i J apac
   /ukviil -maHa/-iS Florence tiij a-ak/-i J apac
   make-want-3.IND Florence teacher-POSS-DET canoe

b. /ukviil -maHa/-iS tiij a-ak/-i Florence J apac

   c. */# /ukviil maHa/iS Florence J apac tiij aak/i
   /ukviil -maHa/-iS Florence J apac tiij a -ak -/i
   make want -3.IND Florence canoe teacher-POSS-DET

   • In contrast, the same test shows that in the raised construction the PSM and PRS are no longer constituents. (11d)

   (11) d. *Florence’s teacher wants to make a canoe (for Florence).*
   /ukviil maHaatuk/iS Florence J apac tiij aak/i
   /ukviil -maHa/-ak-uk/-iS Florence J apac tiij a/a-ak/-i
   make-want-PASS-POSS-3.IND Florence canoe teacher-POSS-DET

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6 This means something like “His rock threw Adam.”

7 cf Nakayama 2001
6. PR is clause-bound.

Possessor raising cannot occur across clause boundaries. In the example below, when the possessive marker -uk is moved past the relative to the main predicate, possession can only be interpreted in the main clause.

(12) a. I hit the man who lost my axe.
   ZikSizitsiS jakup yaqiti pawal sap hiishiisaj akukgs
   Zik-Siz -mit-sis jakup yaq-it -ii pawal-sap
   hit-PERF-PST-1S.IND man who-PST-3.I.REL loose-CAUS
   hiishiisaj ak-uk -gs
   axe -POSS-1S

b. I hit the man whom my axe was lost.
   ZikSizitsiS jakup yaqiti pawal saPat hiishiisaj ak
   Zik-Siz -mit-sis jakup yaq-at -uk -mit-sis
   hit-PERF-PST-1S.IND man who-PASS-POSS-PST-1S.I.REL
   pawal-sap/at hiishiisaj ak
   loose-CAUS-PASS axe

7. Possessive doubling: While the possessive marker can appear in 2 possible locations, it may also appear in both together. Acceptability judgments on this vary.

(13) The doctor’s car is ugly.  (Compare (10) above)
   witq/uk -/iS huupukvasu/i /uStaqyu/i
   witq-uk -/iS huupukvas-uk -/i /uStaqyu-/i
   ugly-POSS-3.S.IND car -POSS-DET doctor-DET

(14) Ken’s canoe got broken (by him/her).
   Kva yaap /at -uk -/iS j aapac-uk /i Ken
   Kva yaap /at -uk -/iS j aapac-uk /i Ken
   broken-CAUS-PASS -POSS-3S.IND canoe-POSS-DET Ken

(15) John’s arm was broken by a bear.
   Kva yaap /at -uk -/iS j aapac-uk /i John
   Kva yaap /at -uk -/iS j aapac-uk /i John
   broken-CAUS-PASS -POSS-3S.IND canoe-POSS-DET Ken

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8 A possessive on man or woman indicates one’s husband or wife.
9 Mary Jane Dick tells me that this is more clearly expressed thus:
   ZikSizykitsiS jakup utaa yaqiti pawal sap hiishiisaj ak
   Zik-Siz-uk-mit-sis jakup utaa yaq-it-ii pawal-sap hiishiisaj ak
In contrast with previous observations (Lee 2003, Braithwaite 2003, Davidson 2002), this construction is not restricted to constructions without an agent.

**Agentive subject:**

(16) a. *My teacher bit a dog* (*A teacher bit my dog*)

_10_ Majizukvits tiij a ?iniiz

Majiz-uk -mit -siS tiij a ?iniiz

bite -POSS-PST-1S.IND teacher dog

**Transitive predicate:**

(17)a. *My dog found a ball.*

_11_ /uyu/aal /IS hupkuml ?iniizukqs

/u-yu/aal -1S hupkuml ?iniiz -uk-qs

0 - find -3.IND ball dog

b. *My dog found a ball.*

/u-yu/aal -uk-siS hupkuml ?iniiz

/u-yu/aal -uk -siS hupkuml ?iniiz

0 - find -POSS-1S.IND ball dog

**II. PR and the notion of SUBJECT in NCN**

Definition of cross-linguistic possessor raising:

A construction where the possessor with a “semantic or argument-structure dependency on an element within a “lower” constituent is [being] structurally realized in a “higher” syntactic unit”, such that the possessor and possessum are contained within separate constituents and the possessor becomes a core grammatical relation of the verb. (Payne and Barshi 1999)

- The description in I. shows that the PSR and PSM become separate constituents

**Question:**

Does the raised possessor constitute a core grammatical relation of the verb? (Is a raised possessor a “subject”?)

**A. Structural assumptions about subject-hood.**

(18)

Under the view represented in the structure in 18, properties of the traditional grammatical function “subject” split between an “underlying” thematic subject and a “surface” subject which controls morphological changes such as case and agreement. The two are often related through syntactic movement.

**Question:**

Are the properties of a raised possessor those of an underlying or a surface subject?

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_10_ Because my speakers tend to adhere to an animacy hierarchy, the more expected sentence “My dog bit a teacher” becomes passivized. (See Kim 2000 for more discussion of the role of animacy in passives.)

_11_ Thanks to Rachel Wojdak for these data.
B. Tests for underlying vs surface subjects:
1. Subject agreement: The final clitic on the predicate agrees in person and number with the subject. (Rose 1981, Davidson 2002, Wojdak 2004)
2. Subject control: Complex predicate environments exhibit subject control of PRO in the absence of the morpheme -/ap (Wojdak, pc)

- I propose that these tests show both underlying and surface subject positions remain active in PR constructions
  1. Subject agreement

(19) I am singing. (adapted from Davidson p. 101)
  nunuukvaz aH
  nunuuk/-az-maH
  sing-TEMP-1S.IND

- In view that agreement is positionally determined, this is indicative of a surface subject

2. Subject control

Recent data collected by R. Wojdak shows that the subject has control over PRO in the environment of a complex predicate, except where the causative marker -/ap is present, in which case a disjoint reference reading results.

- Consider the following:

No additional inflection on predicate: Subject control reading

(20) a. Florence’s teacher wants [PRO] to make a canoe.
  /ukviil maHsa/iS tiij aaj/i Florence J apac
  /ukviil -maHsa-/ap-/iS Florence tiij a -ak -/i J apac
  make -want -CAUS-3.IND Florence teacher-POSS-DET canoe

Causative only added to the predicate: disjoint reading

b. Florence wants her teacher to make a canoe.
  /ukviil maHsa/iS Florence tiij aaj/i J apac
  /ukviil -maHsa-/ap-/iS Florence tiij a -ak -/i J apac
  make -want -POSS-3.IND Florence teacher-POSS-DET canoe

Poss only on the predicate: Subject control reading
c. Florence’s teacher wants to make a canoe.
  /ukviil maHsa/iS Florence tiij aaj/i J apac
  /ukviil -maHsa ak -/iS Florence tiij a -ak -/i J apac
  make -want -POSS-3.IND Florence teacher-POSS-DET canoe

The above data show that subject control is from the underlying position.
- If Florence were the underlying subject of 20c, we predict the sentence would be infelicitous, b/c it would say Florence is making the canoe.
- The underlying subject (the PSM teacher) is still syntactically active, and is not an adjunct.

III. The emerging structure

Underlying form:

(21) IP
     I’
     VP
     V’
     V
     DPSubj
     DPObj
     PSM
     PSR
Predicate-initial verb-raising:

(22) IP
    I'     VP
        V     V'
            DP_{Subj}  DP_{Obj}
                  PSM  PSR

-uk (representing the possessive morpheme) raises above the VP. I assume a copy-raising analysis by way of explaining the possessive doubling observed earlier.

(23) IP
    I'     ?
        V     VP
            -uk     V'
                DP_{Subj}  DP_{Obj}
                      PSM -t_{-uk}  l_{PSR}

PSR raises out of the possessive subject DP to a position from which it controls agreement. For now I will suggest Spec IP. The lower possessor is still active and controls subject-control.

Conclusions:
- Both the surface and logical subjects are active in a PR construction
- Back to the original question, the raised possessor is not a “subject” in the core sense of Payne and Barshi. Rather it is a “surface subject.”

IV. Issues for further study
1. What position is the PSR landing in?
2. What position is the possessive marker landing in?
3. What is the structure of the possessive subject DP such that an element can extract out of it?
4. POSS marking on nominal predicates

(25) That man is my brother  (Wojdak pc)
Haj umsiq-ak-sis  Hba  jakup/-i
brother-POSS-1S.IND DEIC man-DET
References


Key to Glosses

0 - empty
1,2,3 - first, second, third person
CAUS – causative
CONT - continuous
DEIC - deictic
DET - determiner
DUR – durative, formerly IMP (imperfective)
INAL - inalienable possessive
IND – indicative
I.REL – indefinite relative
PASS - passive
PERF – perfective
POSS - possessive
PST - past
QUOT - quotative
REL – definite relative
S, PL - singular, plural
TEMP – temporal marker, sometimes glossed as “now”