Towards a typology of Prominent Internal Possessors

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Syntacticians usually agree that properties of the head of a possessive phrase control clause-level syntactic processes like predicate agreement and that possessors, as non-heads, do not participate in the same processes. Such analyses, however, fail to capture that there are languages in which internal possessors trigger grammatical agreement on the clausal predicate, as in (1) from Maithili. Here, the possessor exhibits a certain level of syntactic, pragmatic and semantic prominence. We call such possessors **prominent internal possessors** (PIPs).

(1) *tohar   bāp   aelthun.*
     your.MH father   came.3>**2MH**
     'Your (MH) father (H) came.'   (Stump & Yadav 1988: 309)

We have two goals: (A), we identify a sample of languages with PIPs. (B), we propose a typological parameter based on what grammatical function(s) (GFs) PIPs are available on. As to (A), PIPs triggering agreement are found in the Americas, Australia and Eurasia (from Siberia to India). As to (B), languages differ in allowing PIPs on a single GF or more than one. In languages restricting PIPs to a single GF, such as Tseltal or Mi'gmaq, agreement with PIPs is syntactically restricted and can be defined in structural terms. Here, agreement with PIPs resembles "possessor raising", without actual raising. In languages where PIPs appear on more than one GF, PIPs can appear on arguments and sometimes even adjuncts. Here, there is no one-to-one mapping between GFs and agreement. The choice of agreement controllers is determined by functional prominence based on information structure or, in the case of Maithili, honorific status, for example. This might not be grammatical agreement, but multiple marking of a feature in terms of Corbett (2012).

References: • Corbett, G. G. 2012. *Features*. CUP. • Stump, G. & R. Yadav. 1988. Maithili verb agreement and the control agreement principle. *CLS* 24.