



Two cases of prominent internal possessor constructions

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The issue

- Consider the following agreement alternation in Maithili (Indo-Aryan, India/Nepal):

- (1) a. *həm tohər nokər-ke pita-l-ie*
I you.MH.GEN servant-ACC hit-PST-1.3NH
- b. *həm tohər nokər-ke pita-l-io*
I you.MH.GEN servant-ACC hit-PST-1.2MH
'I hit your servant.'

- In (1a), the verb agrees with the third person non-honorific (3NH) possessed noun *nokər* 'servant', while in (1b) it agrees with the second person mid-honorific (2MH) possessor *tohər* 'your'.

Trigger happy agreement

- Examples of this kind show that in some languages, agreement is ‘trigger-happy’ (Comrie 2003).
- In such cases, speakers can choose between more than one type of controller (or ‘trigger’) for the same agreement morphology.
- Alternations like that in (1) are particularly interesting because it appears (at least superficially) as though the verb can either agree with the feature values of the head of the object NP, as in (1a), or with those of a dependent of that head, as in (1b).
- This is surprising given the assumption that only heads, and not their dependents, can control clause-level syntactic processes like predicate-argument agreement (cf. the Control Agreement Principle in HPSG).

Prominent internal possessors

- This kind of data suggests that possessors can behave, fully or partially, like clause-level elements, even when there is no evidence that they are external to the possessive NP which bears the argument function in the clause.
- Constructions like that in (1b) will be termed here ‘prominent internal possessor constructions’ or PIPCs, as they feature ‘prominent internal possessors’ or PIPs (Nikolaeva 2014).
- PIPs can be defined by two key morphosyntactic characteristics:
 - (i) PIPs are internal to the NP headed by the possessed noun;
 - (ii) PIPs are syntactically prominent – they can participate in the phrase-external syntax, e.g. by controlling agreement on the verb.

Types of prominence

- Syntactic prominence is an asymmetry between elements such that the most prominent one has some morphosyntactic property that the others lack (Vogel 2015).
- Semantic/information structural prominence is understood here partly as a function of the semantic features of referents, e.g. affectedness, animacy and definiteness, and partly as a function of their information structure roles, in particular topic and focus (Aissen 1999; 2003).

Prominent Possessors

- PIPs exhibit syntactic prominence (e.g. by controlling agreement on the verb), and typically also either semantic or information structural prominence (or both).

Aims

- The aim of this talk is to contrast an existing LFG analysis of PIPCs in Maithili by Dalrymple and Nikolaeva (2005) with a different kind of PIPC in Chimane (unclassified, Bolivia).
- More specifically, I aim to show that:
 - (i) different kinds of analyses are required to explain the phenomenon in Maithili and Chimane. We can therefore predict that agreement between verbs and PIPs does not work the same way in all languages;
 - (ii) speakers' motivations for using PIPCs in both languages appears to be discourse-related.

Outline

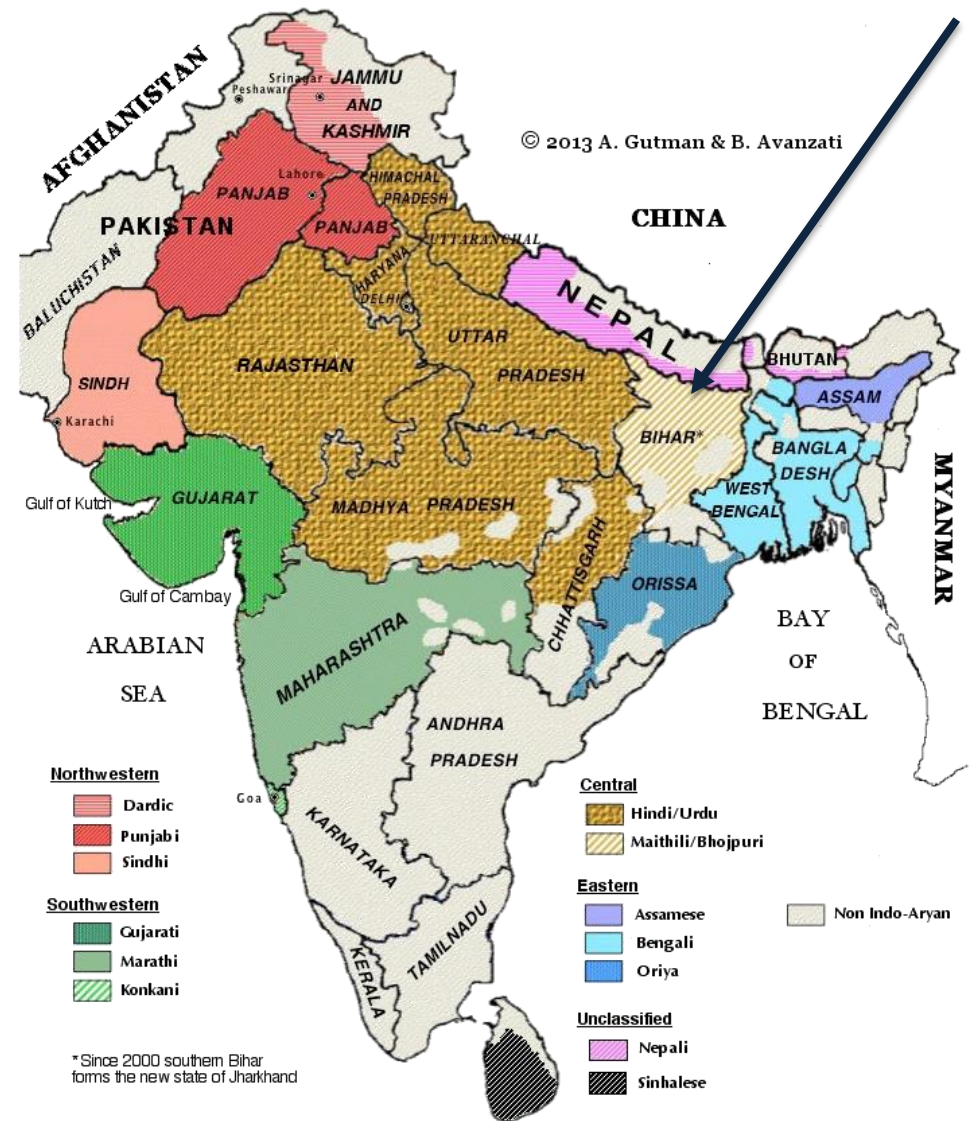
- Key questions
- PIPCs in Maithili
- PIPCs in Chimane
- Proposed syntactic analyses
- Integrating information structure
- Summary and further research

Key questions

- What syntactic evidence is there that the possessor which controls agreement on the verb is internal to the phrase headed by the possessed noun?
- If the possessor is internal, is there any evidence that it is co-indexed with another clause-level argument?
- What prominence features of possessors or other potential controllers determine which one controls verbal agreement?

Background on Maithili

- Maithili is an eastern Indo-Aryan language spoken in India and Nepal.
- It has a system of 'primary' and 'secondary' agreement.
- Primary agreement is always controlled by the subject, while secondary agreement may be controlled by a number of non-subjects, including objects, obliques, and internal possessors.



Primary and secondary agreement in Maithili

- (2) a. *həm tora pita-l-io*
I you.MH.ACC hit-PST-1.2MH
'I hit you (MH).' (object)
- b. *həm tora kitab de-l-io*
I you.MH.ACC book give-PST-1.2MH
'I gave you (MH) a book.' (indirect object)
- c. *tõ hunka-sa kie khisiel chahun?*
you him.H-INSTR why angry be.2MH.3H
'Why are you angry with him?' (oblique, Stump & Yadav 1988)

Secondary agreement with the possessor

- (3) a. *həm tohər nokər-ke pita-l-io*
I you.MH.GEN servant-ACC hit-PST-1.2MH
'I hit your servant.' (possessor internal to object)
- b. *həm tora guruji-ke kitab de-de-l-io*
I you.MH.ACC teacher-ACC book give-BEN-PST-1.2MH
'I gave a book to your teacher.' (possessor internal to ind. obj.)
- c. *həm tohər ghar me rahe-l-io*
I you.MH.GEN house in live-PST-1.2MH
'I lived in your house.' (possessor internal to oblique).

Evidence for internal status: Case marking

- Control of secondary agreement on the verb by possessors internal to subject NPs does not occur in the dialects of Maithili spoken by our consultants in London (native speakers from southeast Nepal).
- In the dialect studied by Stump and Yadav (1988), however, this is possible and they show that the possessor cannot exhibit nominative case marking in this case.

(4) *tohər* / **tõ* *bap* *ae-l-thun*
you.MH.GEN / *you.MH.NOM* *father* *come-PST-3H.2MH*
'Your father came.'

(Stump & Yadav 1988: 313-4)

Evidence for internal status: Word order

- Possessors must precede the possessed noun and cannot be separated from it by other clausal constituents:

(5) **həm* *nokər-ke* *tohər* *pita-l-io*
 I servant-ACC you.MH.GEN hit-PST-1.2MH
 ‘I hit your servant.’

(6) a. *həm* *tohər* *nokər-ke* *khali* *pita-l-io*
 I you.MH.GEN servant-ACC yesterday hit-PST-1.2MH

 b. **həm* *tora* *khali* *nokər-ke* *pita-l-io*
 I you.MH.ACC yesterday servant-ACC hit-PST-1.2MH
 ‘I hit your servant yesterday.’

Evidence for internal status: Passivization

(7) *o tora bap-ke dekha-l-thun*
he.H you.MH.ACC father-ACC see-PST-3H.2NH
'He saw your father.'

(8) a. *tohār bap dekha-l gel*
you.MH.GEN father see-PST went.3NH

b. **tõ bap(-ke) dekha-l gele*
you.MH.NOM father-ACC see-PST went.2MH
'Your father was seen.'

(Stump & Yadav 1988: 317)

Is there an external controller of agreement?

- No clear evidence for a clause-level agreement controller which is co-indexed with the possessor in Maithili.

Arguments

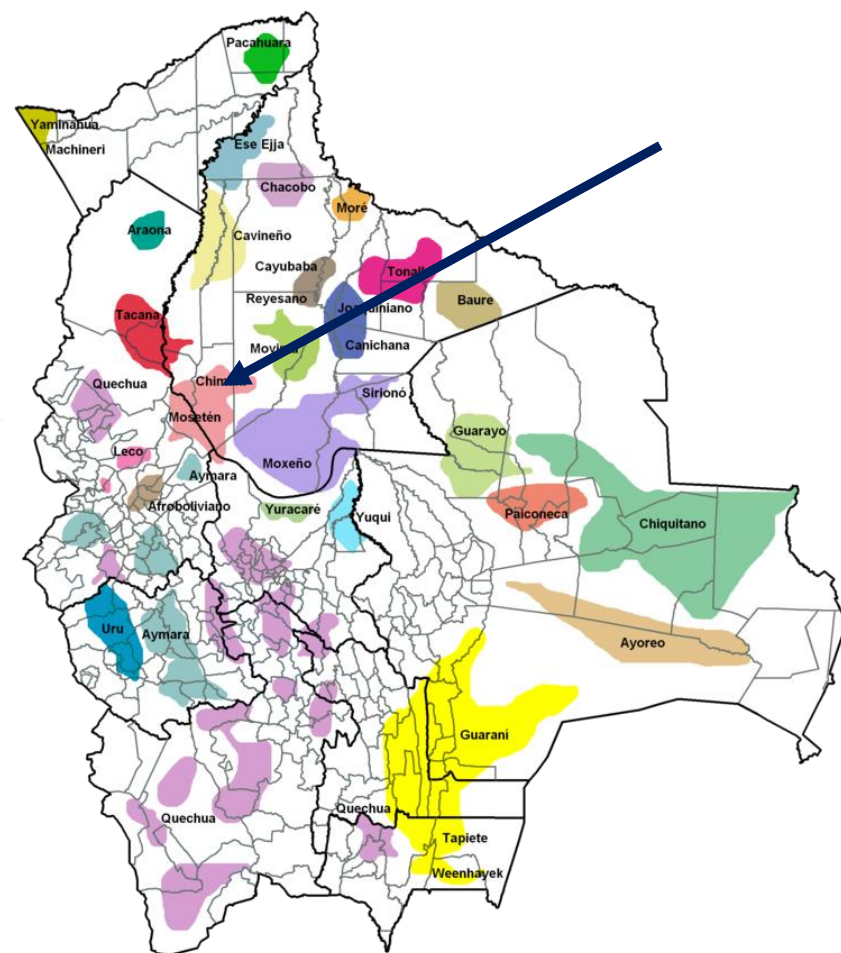
- There is never an overt realisation of such an argument;
- Verbs which do not have an (implied) goal, recipient or beneficiary can also exhibit agreement with the possessor;
- Other non-terms can also control agreement on the verb.

Question

- If there is no external controller, how can internal possessors control agreement on the verb in Maithili?

Background on Chimane

- Chimane is an unclassified language spoken in Amazonian Bolivia.
- Grammatical relations are signalled by predicate-argument agreement only. There is no core case marking.
- Complex transitive agreement paradigm involving one or more agreement suffixes depending on the combination of subject and object.



Object agreement in Chimane

- (9) a. *Juan cät-je-te Sergio.*
Juan(M) hit-CLF-3SG.M.O Sergio(M)
'Juan hit Sergio.' (object)
- b. *Mu' muntyi' so'm-e-' mu' achuj Maria.*
the.M man(M) give-CLF-3SG.F.O the.M dog(M) Maria(F)
'The man gave Maria the dog.' (indirect object)
- c. *Sergio sit-i / *sit-i-' aca'-cân.*
Sergio(M) enter-CLF.M.S enter-CLF-3SG.F.O house(F)-INE
'Sergio went into the house.' (no agreement with oblique)

Object agreement with the possessor

- Chimane optionally exhibits object agreement with the internal possessor.

- (10) a. *Juan* *täj-je-'* *un* *mu'* *Sergio-s.*
Juan(M) hit-CLF-3SG.F.O hand(F) the.M Sergio(M)-F
'Juan touched Sergio's hand.' (possessed noun)
- b. *Juan* *täj-je-bi-te* *un* *mu'* *Sergio-s.*
Juan(M) hit-CLF-APPL-3SG.M.O hand(F) the.M Sergio(M)-F
'Juan touched Sergio's hand.' (possessor internal to object NP)

Disjoint reference in possessor agreement

- Only possessors which are disjoint in reference from the subject can control agreement.

- (11) a. *Maria* *täj-je-te* *cas=mə'*
Maria(F) touch-CLF-3SG.M.O knee(M)=her
'Maria_i touched her_{i/j} knee.' (default 3>3 is ambiguous)
- b. *Maria* *täj-je-bi-'* *cas=mə'*
Maria(F) touch-CLF-APPL-3SG.F.O knee(M)=her
'Maria_i touched her_{j/*i} knee.' (poss. agr. with disjoint poss.)
- c. *Maria* *täj-je-ya-qui-'* *cas=mə'*
Maria(F) touch-CLF-EPEN-REFL.POSS-F.S knee(M)=her
'Maria_i touched her_{i/*j} knee.' (no object agr. with reflexive poss.)

Evidence for internal status: Nominal agreement

- PIP in Chimane must exhibit agreement with the possessed noun.

(12) *Juan* *täj-je-bi-te* *un* *mu'* *Sergio*(-s)*.
Juan(M) hit-CLF-APPL-3SG.M.O hand(F) the.M Sergio(M)-F
'Juan touched Sergio's hand.'

Evidence for internal status: Word order

- There is no strict word order in the possessive NP like in Maithili.
- However, there are some positional restrictions on certain types of possessor expressions which show that PIPs are internal.
- PIPs can combine with their own determiner, as in (13) where the possessor *Isabel* combines with the determiner *mɔ'* 'the':

(13) *Maria* *täj-je-bi-'*
Maria(F) touch-CLF-APPL-3SG.F.O

[*mu'* *cas* [*mɔ'* *Isabel-tyi'*]].
the.M knee(M) the.F Isabel(F)-M
'Maria touched Isabel's knee.'

Positional restriction on PIPs with determiners

- PIP's which combine with determiners cannot immediately follow the determiner of the entire possessive phrase, showing that there is some internal structure in the possessive NP and that the possessor is internal.

(14) **Maria* *täj-je-bi-*'
 Maria(F) touch-CLF-APPL-3SG.F.O

[*mu'* [*mọ'* *Isabel-tyi'*] *cas*].
the.M the.F Isabel(F)-M knee(M)
(‘Maria touched Isabel’s knee.’)

Evidence for internal status: Passivization

- (15) a. *Maria-ty vojity=mə'*
Maria(F)-M brother(M)=her

ja'-cat-bu-ti-' (Juan).
PASS-hit-APPL-PASS-F.S Juan(M)
'Maria's brother was hit (by Juan).'

- b. **Maria vojity*
Maria(F) brother(M)

ja'-cat-bu-ti-' Juan.
PASS-hit-APPL-PASS-F.S Juan(M)
(Maria's brother was hit by Juan.)

Requirement for additional morphology

- There are several differences between the Chimane PIPC and that found in Maithili.
- Agreement between verb and internal possessor can only occur in the presence of the applicative suffix *-bi*.

(16) *Juan* *täj-je*(-bi)-te* *un* *mu'* *Sergio-s.*
Juan(M) hit-CLF-APPL-3SG.M.O hand(F) the.M Sergio(M)-F
(‘Juan touched Sergio’s hand.’)

No agreement with possessors internal to obliques

(17) *Mu' Juan* *bä-yi* / **bä-yi-n* /
the.M Juan(M) sit-CLF.M.S sit-CLF-3>1/2SG

**bä-ye-bu-n* *covamba-che=yu*
sit-CLF-APPL-3>1/2SG canoe-SUPE=my

'Juan sat in my canoe.'

No agreement with possessors internal to subjects

- (18) *Mu' vojity=yu* *naj-tyi-n* /
the.M brother(M)=my see-CLF-3>1/2SG
- *naj-tye-ye* / **naj-bi-ye* *mi.*
see-CLF-1SG>2SG see-APPL-1SG>2SG you
- 'My brother saw you.'

Is there an external controller of agreement?

- There is some evidence for a clause-level agreement controller which is co-indexed with the possessor in Chimane.

Arguments

- Sometimes PIPs are accompanied by a doubling clitic pronoun which may be an overt expression of a clause-level realisation of the PIP.
- Crucially, this element cannot occur in the default construction in which the possessed noun controls agreement on the verb, suggesting that it fills an argument slot in the PIPC which is not present in the default.

External realisation of the internal possessor

- Optional doubling clitic pronoun when PIP controls object agreement on the verb:

(19) *Mi* *naj-bi-te* *ococo* *Juan-si'* (=mu').
you see-CLF-APPL-3SG.M.O frog(F) Juan(M)_i-F =him_i
'You saw Juan's frog.'

- Doubling pronoun is strange or ungrammatical when possessed noun controls object agreement:

(20) *Mi* *naj-tye-'* *ococo* *Juan-si'* (?*=mu').
you see-CLF-3SG.F.O frog(F) Juan(M)_i-F =him_i
'You saw Juan's frog.'

External realisation is an applied object

- There are several kinds of evidence which suggest that this external realisation of the internal possessor is an applied object.
 - The requirement of the additional verbal suffix *-bi* in PIPCs.
 - In ditransitive PIPCs, the beneficiary/recipient etc. corresponds to the internal possessor.

(21) *Ji'-cañ-e-bi-baj-te* *qui* *ava'*.
CAUS-return-CLF-APPL-again-3SG.M.O so baby(F)
'So she [the girl] gives it_i [the monkey] back its_i baby.'

- This indicates that the external realisation of the possessor is the primary object, and the possessed noun is the secondary object.

Comparison of Maithili and Chimane PIPCs

	Maithili	Chimane
Controller can be...		
Subject	✓	✓
Subject possessor	✓	X
(Primary) object	✓	✓
(Primary) object possessor	✓	(✓)*
Secondary object	X	X
Secondary object possessor	X	X
Oblique	✓?	X
Possessor of oblique	✓	X
Additional morphology on the verb	X	✓
Optional doubling clitic pronoun	X	✓

*not actually the possessor but its external realisation which controls agreement.

Characteristics of Maithili PIPCs

- Possessors internal to a range of terms and non-terms can control secondary agreement on the verb.
- Other non-terms can also control secondary agreement on the verb.
- No additional verbal morphology and no doubling pronouns required when PIPs control secondary agreement.

How does the internal possessor control agreement?

- It is likely that Maithili has a true ‘trigger-happy’ agreement system.
- Almost any element can potentially control secondary agreement, so agreement does not match one-to-one with grammatical functions, but instead references semantically or information structurally prominent entities (Dalrymple & Nikolaeva 2005; 2011).

Characteristics of Chimane PIPCs

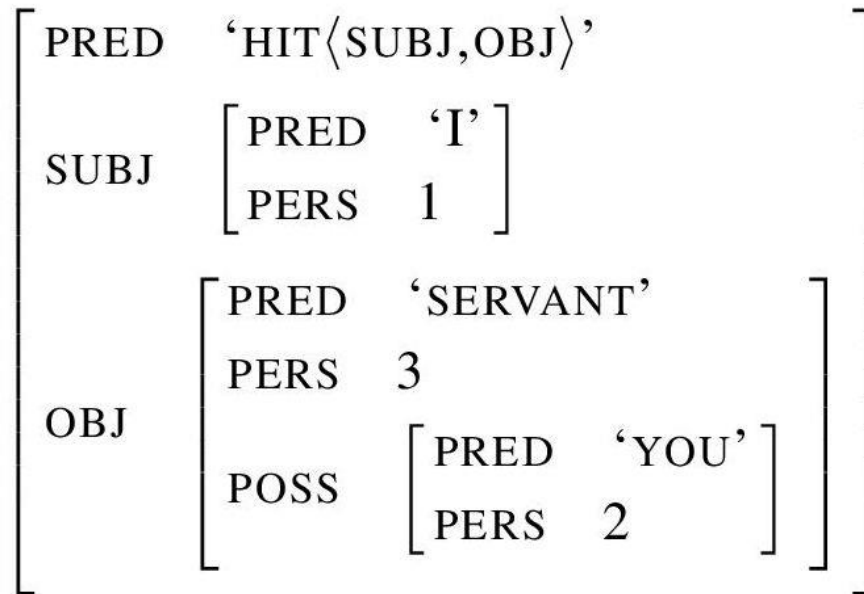
- Only possessors internal to object NPs can control object agreement.
- Other non-terms cannot control object agreement.
- Additional morphology is required and there is an optional doubling clitic pronoun when PIPs control agreement.

How does the internal possessor control agreement?

- It is likely that the Chimane PIPC is in fact an applicative double object construction in which the clause-level realisation of the internal possessor bears the primary object function.
- Chimane is not ‘trigger-happy’; one-to-one matching between agreement and grammatical functions is preserved as only grammatical functions can control verbal agreement.

F-structure of Maithili default construction & PIPC

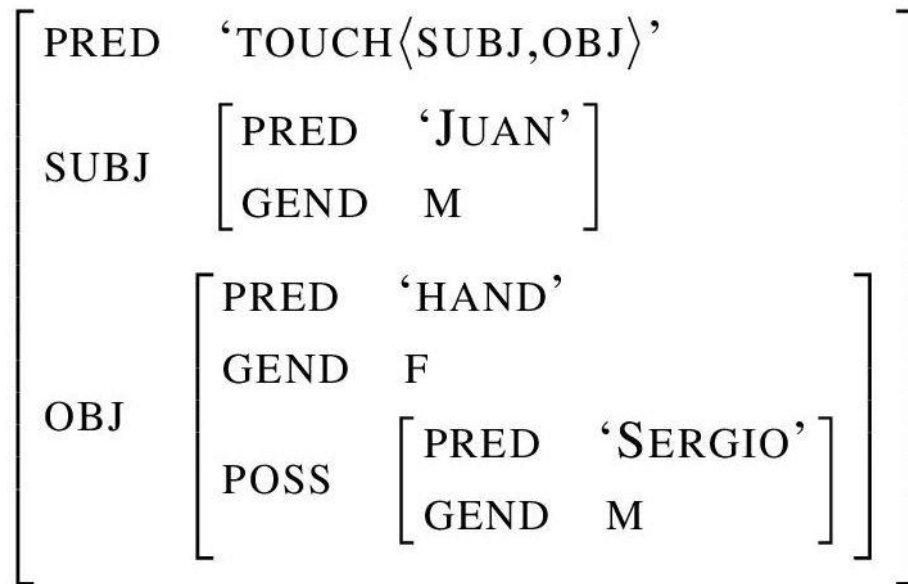
(22) *həm tohər nokər-ke pita-l-io / pita-l-ie*
 I you.MH.GEN servant-ACC hit-PST-1.2MH hit-PST-1.3NH
 ‘I hit your servant.’



based on Dalrymple & Nikolaeva (2005: 87)

F-structure of Chimane default construction

- (23) *Juan* *täj-je-'* *un* *mu'* *Sergio-s.*
Juan(M) hit-CLF-3SG.F.O *hand(F)* *the.M Sergio(M)-F*
 'Juan touched Sergio's hand.'



F-structure of Chimane PIPC

- (24) *Juan* *täj-je-bi-te* *un* *mu'* *Sergio-s(=mu')*
Juan(M) hit-CLF-APPL-3SG.M.O *hand(F)* the.M *Sergio(M)-F=him*
 'Juan touched Sergio's hand.'

PRED	'TOUCH⟨SUBJ,OBJ,OBJ _θ ⟩'												
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Alternation of PIPCs and default constructions

- PIPCs have also been identified in many other languages apart from Chimane and Maithili.
- In all the cases identified so far, PIPCs alternate in discourse with default agreement constructions.

Question

- What motivates speakers' choices between PIPCs and default constructions?

Motivating the alternation in other languages

- Stump & Yadav (1988): the NP which control secondary agreement in Maithili is the most prominent one in the clause other than the subject, where prominence is a function of three interrelated properties: (i) emphasis; (ii) honorific grade; and (iii) animacy.
- Kibrik and Seleznev (1980): agreement between PIPs and verbs in Tabassaran (Nakh-Daghestanian) is ‘pragmatic’ because the agreement controller is more ‘prominent’ or ‘emphatic’ than nonagreeing elements.
- Dixon (2000): seems to implicitly rely on the assumption that arguments (and therefore agreement controllers including internal possessors) are topics in Jarawara (Arawan).

Motivating the alternation in other languages

- Neukom (2000): PIPCs are used when the possessor is more affected by the action in Santali (Munda).
- Bobaljik and Wurmbrand (2002): agreement alternations in Itelmen (Chukotko-Kamchatkan) are determined by discourse prominence/salience.
- Golovko (2009): topicality determines the choice of agreement controller in Aleut (Eskimo-Aleut).
- Meakins and Nordlinger (2014: 210): cite affectedness of the possessor and “culturally important relationships of possession such as kinship and land tenure” in Bilinarra (Pama-Nyungan).

Motivating the alternation in Chimane

- Evidence suggests that topicality of the possessor may also (at least partially) motivate the alternation in Chimane.



Topic agreement in body parts task

(25) a. 'What's happening to the [woman's knee]?'
TOPIC

b. *Toco'-je-te.*
touch-CLF-3SG.M.O
'He's touching it.'

(26) a. 'What's happening to [the woman]?'
TOPIC

b. *Cas=mə'* *toco'-je-bi-'*
knee(M)=her touch-CLF-APPL-3SG.F.O
'He's touching her knee.'

Topic agreement in kinship task

- In another stimulus-based task, participants were shown pictures of a person acting on another person, with a third person looking on.
- The participants were told that the person being acted on and the person looking on were kin (e.g. brother and sister).

<i>Situation</i>	<i>Question</i>	<i>PIPC</i>	<i>%</i>
man grabs man's sister	Why is the man angry?	9/16	56
	What's happening to his sister?	0/16	0
woman hits woman's son	Why is the woman angry?	12/16	75
	What's happening to her son?	4/16	25

Topic agreement in narrative task

- Context: a brother and sister interact with their parents, then leave for the forest. Then they go to the river and find a canoe.
- It was explained to the participants beforehand that this canoe belonged to the children's father.
- Participants used IPCs rather than PIPCs to describe this situation:

(27) *Aty jɔba-'=in nɔij-te*
now leave-F.S=**they** see.CLF-3SG.M.O

covamba jen'-tyi'=in.
canoe(M) father(M)-M=**their**

'Now they're leaving and see their father's canoe.'

General constraint in ‘trigger-happy’ languages

- In their analysis of topical non-subject agreement in Tabassaran, Dalrymple and Nikolaeva (2011) offer the following formalization of the general constraint that any non-subject element which bears a topic role will control agreement on the verb.

$$((\uparrow [\text{GF-SUBJ}])_{\sigma} \text{ DF}) = \text{TOPIC}$$

(Dalrymple and Nikolaeva 2011: 122)

- This constraint also seems to apply very aptly to Maithili, assuming that whichever non-subject element which controls secondary agreement is topical.

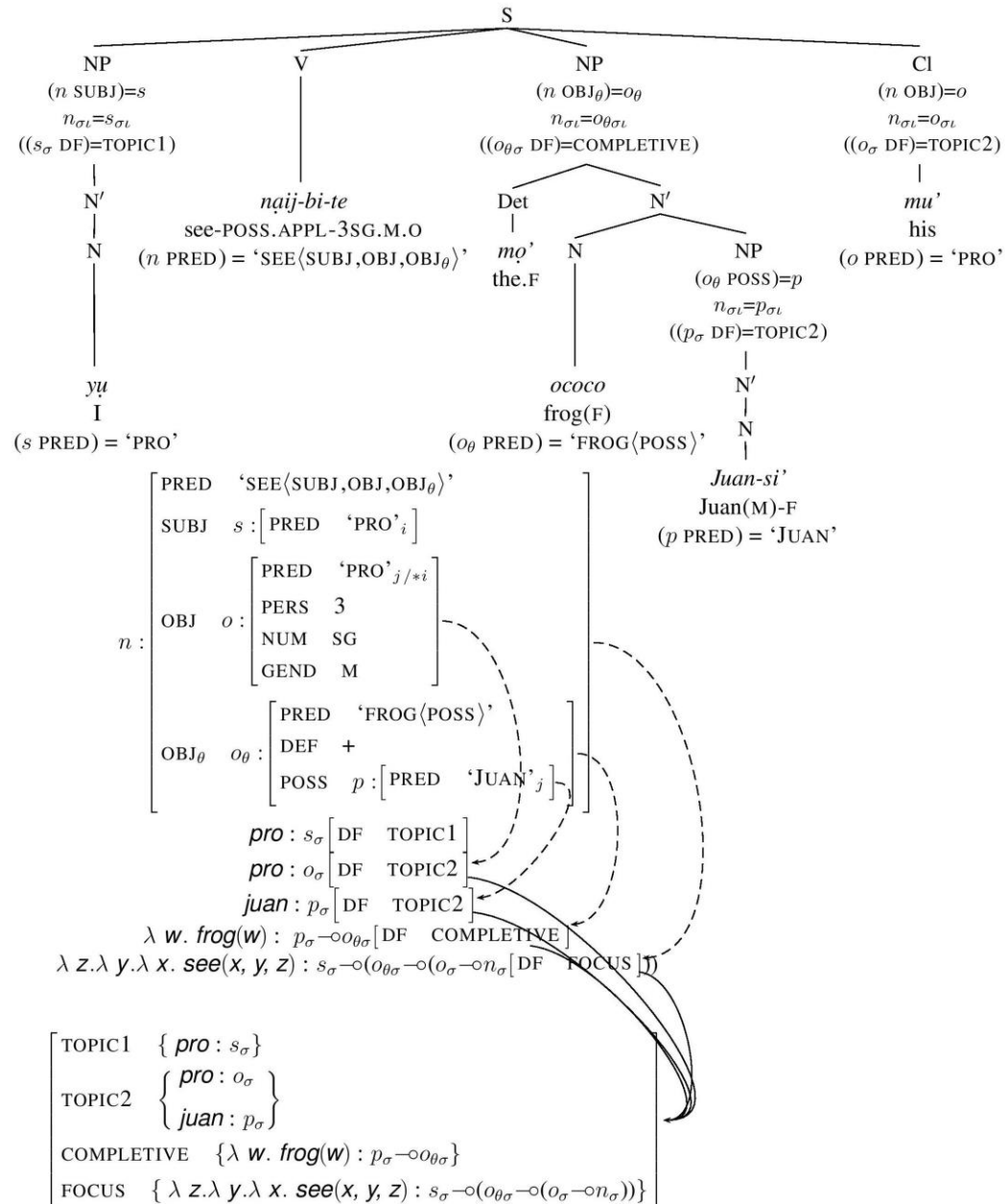
General constraint in Chimane

- In Chimane, the constraint will be slightly different, as only grammatical functions can control agreement.
- In this case, the constraint will entail that whichever element is topical will be the object:

$$((\uparrow \text{OBJ})_{\sigma} \text{DF}) = \text{TOPIC}$$

- Thus in cases where the internal possessor is more topical than the possessive phrase, then it (or rather its clause-level representation) will bear the primary object function instead of the possessive phrase.

Integrated analysis of Chimane PIPC



Summary

- The phenomenon of agreement between verbs and internal possessors requires different kinds of analyses for different languages.
- The ‘trigger happy’ type exemplified by Maithili requires a loosening of the strict one-to-one correspondence between grammatical functions and agreement controllers.
- The ‘mediated locality’ type exemplified by Chimane requires the postulation of a (potentially phonologically null) coindexed representation of the internal possessor in the clause.
- In both cases the use of PIPCs in discourse may be motivated by the semantic and/or information structural prominence of the possessor.

Further research on Chimane

- Specifically on the analysis of Chimane:
- It is not clear what is the anaphoric binding domain of the negative constraint which specifies that the agreeing possessor is disjoint in reference from the subject. Further data is required to test this.
- It is also not clear how to capture this constraint in the analysis and formal representation; starred indices seem inadequate as a formalisation.

Further research on PIPCs

- Are there other types of PIPCs? What kind of syntactic analysis do they require?
- Can prominent possessors participate in other clause-level syntactic processes apart from predicate-argument agreement? What are these processes?
- An interesting case is switch reference: in Turkish and several other languages, internal possessors appear to be able control same-subject marking.
- How does possessor prominence fit into the broader typology of 'non-canonical' agreement?

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F-Structure of the reflexive PIPC in Chimane

- (28) *Maria* *cat-je-ya-qui-* *cu'-tyi'* *vojity=mọ'*
 Maria(F) hit-CLF-EPEN-REFL.POSS-F.S self-M brother(M)=her
 'Maria_i hit her_i brother.'

