

Possessive Constructions in Lamaholot

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Common belief: In languages of eastern Indonesia, the possessor precedes the possessee. Himmelmann (2005: 175) divides non-Oceanic Austronesian languages into *symmetrical voice languages* (western) and *preposed possessor languages* (eastern).

Klamer (2002: 372): That is not always the case; even within a single language (e.g., Fehan Tetun), the order may be variable.

This observation actually goes back at least to Arndt (1937: 20) for some dialects of Lamaholot, spoken in eastern Flores and neighboring islands.

For example, in the Lewoingu dialect of Lamaholot (Nishiyama and Kelen 2007, chapter 3), ‘teacher’s house’ is either *guru lango-nvn* ‘teacher house-3sg’ or *lango guru na’en* ‘house teacher his’. (*v* is schwa in the orthography of Lamaholot in this paper.)

Possessors are marked either by a genitive pronoun or a suffix. They are in complementary distribution.

possessor	full NP possessor absent	full NP possessor present
genitive pronoun	Type A	Type C
suffix	Type B	Type D

Table 1 Pronominal system of Lamaholot (Lewoingu)

	nominative/accusative	genitive	prefix	suffix
1sg	go	go’en	k-	-kvn
2sg	mo	mo’en	m-	-ko/-no
3sg	(ro)na	na’en	n-	V-na/N-nvn
1pl.ex	kame	kame’en	m-	-kvn
1pl.in	tite	tite’en	t-	-te
2pl	mio	mion	m-	-ke/-ne
3pl	ra	ra’en	r-	-ka

1. Type A: possessor is genitive pronoun, the full NP possessor is absent.

In this type, the possessed noun is followed by a genitive pronoun:

- (1) lango go’en ‘my house’
 oto mo’en ‘your car’
 mata go’en ‘my eye’

go’en and *mo’en* can also mean ‘mine’ and ‘yours’ when the possessed noun is understood and is thus dropped.

There is no distinction between alienable and inalienable possession, as common in other Austronesian languages west of Alor/Pantar and Timor (Klamer et al. 2008) or other dialects of Lamaholot (Keraf 1978).

2. Type B: possessor is suffix, the full NP possessor is absent.

In this type, a possessive suffix is attached to the possessed:

- | | | |
|-----|-----------|--------------------|
| (2) | lango-ke | 'your (pl) house' |
| | bapa'-kvn | 'my father' |
| | bapa'-ko | 'your (sg) father' |
| | bapa'-nvn | 'his/her father' |
| | mata-kvn | 'my eye' |
| | mata-ko | 'your eye' |

For some speakers, the usage of nominal suffixes is restricted. Thus, genitive pronouns must be used instead for some nouns.

Verbal suffix can attach to a noun to yield a verbal meaning. Since most suffixes are ambiguous between verbal suffix and nominal suffix, we can have non-possessive (verbal) constructions as follows:

- | | | |
|-----|----------|-------------------------------------|
| (3) | lango-ke | 'Are you (pl) going to your house?' |
| | lango-ko | 'Are you (sg) going to your house?' |

The sentences can also mean 'Did you go to your house?', 'You went to your house,' or 'This is your house.' On the other hand, the genitive pronouns in Type A never induce a sentential meaning.

Interesting cases are the third singular:

- | | | |
|-----|-----------|-------------------------|
| (4) | lango-nvn | 'his house' |
| | lango-na | 'He went to his house.' |

Only the third singular shows the division of labor between a nominal suffix and a verbal suffix: *-nvn* is a nominal suffix and *-na* is a verbal suffix.

- | | | |
|-----|-----------|-------------------------|
| (5) | buku-nvn | 'his book' |
| | ??buku-na | '#He went to his book.' |

3. Type C: possessor is genitive pronoun, the full NP possessor is present.

- | | | |
|-----|-------------------|-----------------------|
| (6) | lango guru na'en | 'the teacher's house' |
| | house teacher his | |

- | | | |
|-----|-------------------|--|
| (7) | *lango na'en guru | |
| | lango guru | |

When the possessed noun is understood, the noun can be dropped and *guru na'en* itself can mean 'the teachers' (something).'

If the possessor is plural, *ra'en* is used:

- (8) lango guru ra'en 'the teachers' (pl) house(s)/faculty residence'
house teacher their
- (9) labu inamvlake ra'en '(the) men's shirt'
shirt man their

The possessor is either specific ('the teachers' (pl) house' or 'the men's shirt') or generic ('faculty residence' or 'men's shirt'). With either of the meaning, the genitive *ra'en* can be dropped. (This is due to the influence of Indonesian. Still, having *ra'en* is preferred to dropping it.)

To make the specificity of the possessor clearer, the definite marker is used:

- (10) labu inamvlake pe'en na'en 'the man's shirt'
shirt man the his

Proper noun possession is as follows:

- (11) oto Lado na'en 'Lado's car'
car L. his
- (12) lima Bala na'en 'Bala's hand'
hand B. his

Unlike in the case of the common noun possessor, the genitive is obligatory, and the order is fixed.

4. Type D: possessor is suffix, the full NP possessor is present.

- (13) guru oto-nvn 'teacher's (sg) car'
teacher car-3sg
- (14) guru oto-ka 'teachers' (pl) car'
teacher car-3pl

The verbal suffix *-na* is strictly prohibited in possessive construction: **guru oto-na* 'teacher car-3sg' is ungrammatical. The same distinction as (13-14) can be made by the genitive pronoun in Type C possessive construction:

- (15) oto guru na'en 'teacher's (sg) car '
(16) oto guru ra'en 'teachers' (pl) car'

To express a generic possessor, the third plural *-ka* is used:

- (17) guru lango-ka 'faculty residence'
teacher house-3pl

This also means 'teachers' (pl) house' with a specific possessor. Proper noun possessor is as follows:

- (18) Bala lango-nvn 'Bala's house'
B. house-3sg

Recall that the same meaning is expressed with Type C construction as *lango Bala na'en* 'house Bala his', and the order is fixed for both constructions.

- (19) Bala oto-nvn 'Bala's car (sole owner)'
B. car-3sg
- (20) Bala oto-ka 'the Bala family's car'
B. car-3pl

When the suffix is third singular, the possessor is the sole owner. When the suffix is plural, the possessor is the whole family.

- (21) Bala no'on Leping lango-ka 'Bala and Leping's house'
B. and L. house-3pl
- (22) *Bala no'on Leping lango-nvn
B. and L. house-3sg

When the possessor is plural, the suffix must also be plural.

The choice between Type C and Type D seems to be a matter of focus. That is, of the two orders of possessor-possessed and possessed-possessor, whichever comes first gets focus.

- (23) go tvngv Bala lango-nvn hala'. go tvngv Lado lango-nvn.
I see B. house-3sg not I see L. house-3sg
'I didn't see Bala's house. I saw *Lado's* house.'
- (24) go tvngv Bala lango-nvn hala'. go niko tvngv oto (?Bala) na'en
I see B. house-3sg not I only see car B his
'I didn't see Bala's house. I only saw Bala's *car*.'

In the introducing part in both examples, the order is *Bala lango-nvn*. This might indicate that the possessor-possessed order (Type D) is an unmarked order.

Double possessive is expressed as follows.

- (25) kvwae na'e loron bvsuk-nvn 'his wife's birthday'
wife his day birth-her

How did such a complicated system as described above emerge?

→ influence of Papuan languages (Klamer, Reesink, and van Staden 2008)

The location of the languages discussed



A: Alorese, B: Taba, F: Tetun Fehan, K: Kambera, L: Lamaholot, M: Maybrat, W: Teiwa

5. Areal feature and Papuan influence

Alorese (in Alor-Pantar) was earlier believed to be a dialect of Lamaholot, but Klamer (2011) shows that it is a language of its own. In contrast to Lamaholot, Alorese has no possessor suffixes (ibid: 52; see also Klamer forthcoming a: 10, forthcoming b: 10):

- (26) a. ni uma Alorese
 3sg house
 'his house'
- b. bapa John ni uma Alorese
 father John 3sg house
 'Bapa John's house'

The word order resembles that of Papuan languages (Klamer 2010: 189):

- (27) yivar ga-manak Teiwa
 dog 3sg-master
 'the dog's master'

Thus, the Papuan influence seems stronger in Alorese, eradicating the original Austronesian possessed-possessor order. Lamaholot, in contrast, shows mixed features of Austronesian and Papuan, yielding complex characteristics.

Another Papuan feature observed in Austronesian languages in eastern Indonesia is the position of negation. In both Lamaholot and Alorese, negation appears after the predicate:

- (28) a. go bvrin na hala' Lamaholot
 I hit him NEG
 'I don't hit him.' (Nishiyama and Kelen 2007: 69)
- b. no pana ha n-ei tahi lahe Alorese
 3sg walk this 3sg-go sea NEG
 'He did not go to the sea [again].' (Klamer forthcoming a: 6)

This is also the case with most Austronesian languages in the Bird's Head (Biak, Mor, Ambai, Waropen, Wandem-Windesi, Iraputu). For languages in the Moluccas, although many of them have preverbal negation, Taba and Buru have clause final negation (Klamer, Reesink, and van Staden 2008: 132f)

- (29) nik calana kuda-k asfal te Taba
 1sg.pos trousers be.black-appl bitumen NEG
 'My trousers are not blackened with bitumen.'
 (Klamer, Reesink, and van Staden 2008: 133 < Bowden 2001: 336)

Negation in Austronesian typically appears before predicates. This is true even with Kambara (in Sumba) and Tetun Fehan (in Timor), spoken in Lamaholot's vicinity (Klamer, Reesink, and van Staden 2008: 132):

- (30) a. nda ku-hili beli-ma-nya-pa Kambara
 NEG 1sg.nom-again return-emph-3sg.dat-impf
 'I am not going back to him again.' (Klamer 1998: 77)
- b. hau la h-bá Tetun Fehan
 1sg NEG 1sg-go
 'I'm not going.' (van Klinken 1999: 229)

Interestingly, Tetun Fehan also has a postverbal (but not sentence-final) negator:

- (31) hola ha'i na'an hola ha'i boek Tetun Fehan
 take NEG meat take NEG shrimp
 'They didn't catch fish, they didn't catch shrimp.' (van Klinken 1999: 229)

In contrast, negations in Papuan languages constantly appear after predicates. This is true regardless of whether the language is SVO or SOV

- (32) ana m-amo Kumurkek fe Maybrat
 they 3pl-go K. NEG
 'They do not go to Kumurkek.'
 (Klamer, Reesink, and van Staden 2008: 130 < Dol 1999: 127)

- (33) na ha'an pua-n yaa qai maan Teiwa
 1s you snap-real descend just NEG
 'I'm not cheating you.' (Klamer 2010: 275)

Thus, post-predicative negation is a Papuan feature spreading over part of Austronesian languages in eastern Indonesia.

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