1. Introduction. An intensive examination of the possessive constructions in one Coast Tsimshian text indicates that an analogy between sentence structure and possessives structure is a useful one for this language. A Minimalist Program (Chomsky 1995) theoretical approach facilitates the construction of this analogy. Part 2 of this paper contains the possessive constructions data. These come from a text narrated by Henry Pierce and originally transcribed by William Beynon (1980). Part 3 outlines the writer's theoretical assumptions, with special focus on the universal computational system for building phrasal structure and the notion that NPs are complements and specifiers to determiner heads (cf. Abney 1987, Logobardi 1994, Tremblay 1991). Part 4 presents the writer's analysis of the possessive constructions data. I take as my starting point Boas' (1911) analysis of possessives in Coast Tsimshian.

2. The woman who pretended to be dead. The adawx (true saying) of the Origin of Txaams and Lagabu/a, narrated by Henry Pierce and transcribed by William Beynon for Franz Boas (Beynon 1980, no. 119), consists of a cycle of stories about the hero Txaamsm. The first story in this cycle is about the hero's parents and his strange birth. I entitle this first story in the cycle The woman who pretended to be dead. This story contains twenty different possessive constructions, many of them repeated several times and many of them compound, i.e., possessives embedded within possessives. In the writer's opinion this corpus is representative of the range of data to be found in possessive constructions in the Coast Tsimshian language. I here present these twenty constructions with story context (in English), sentential context (in Coast Tsimshian), and morphological glossary. I have retranscribed the Coast Tsimshian, using the practical writing system in general use.

THE WOMAN WHO PRETENDED TO BE DEAD

There was a great village at the mouth of the Nass River

2.1
siüü kluusms
mouth Nass River

T 'aaga wii galts'apga a siüü kluusms.
sit great village at mouth Nass

There was a great chief lived
and his wife also.

2.2
naks-t
spouse his
Ada 'nii wii dzooxsga 'wii sm'ootit ada nakst.
and there where lived great chief and wife-his

His wife was very beautiful and the great chief
loved her dearly

But he was a hunter
always away out hunting
as soon as he left
to go hunting
who
visited
for as long
Out hunting
her lover secretly lay with her

2.3
na siip'nsq- a t
discon lover possessive

Ada al sga 'naga waalsga k'amtsn na sii'pnsqat
and just how long do secretly — lover-her

2.4
na ts'üwaan 'wii sa'mnt
discon top great spruce

Ada na ts'üwaan 'wii sa'mnt
and — top great spruce

ni'i mi dmwil lisgüü- yu.
there you must lay-me
After she had said these things she seemed really to be dead. All that she asked the great chief did.

He built a great coffin-box and placed in it the body of his wife.

The great chief's heart was sorely troubled that his wife was now dead so burdened he almost took his own life was his heart.

And he then put in body wife-his He also placed in it food and grave goods of a huge cedar tree had asked before she died.

Ada-t wil lumaga na sami naks-t. And he then put-in _ body wife-his

Ada sm doxt ga goofsga 'wii sm'oo-git and very troubled heart great chief that now dead wife-his

Ada gidza lip gilks malksit and almost self cremate a sga doxt ga goof.

Because so troubled heart-his
Every night he came to watch where she lay for a long time. Day began falling down, the chief wept most bitterly that the body was corrupted.

As soon as the great chief the place then the woman's secret came.

Then he left off watching stopped guarding where his wife lay her lover.

...at man goosga wil lighisicga hana'axga...to up go where lay woman gu naka sm'oogit.

He knocked on the outside of the coffin.

2.10 kwutunsga xpiis

Ada wil-t nah 'ye'tsa kwutunsga xpiis, and then he struck outside box.

He knocked on the outside of the coffin and said "Let me in, Ghost!"
the woman recognized therefore she spoke to be full of maggots?"

opened the coffin and the man inside just before he went away

Then the woman where she lay went and made love to her dawn

Sometimes the chief the woman's came to weep

2.11

The woman's came mourning then the woman white shavings would let from a bone spoon fall down

Sometimes husband To weep his wife

2.12

The woman's came mourning then the woman white shavings would let from a bone spoon fall down

Sometimes husband To weep his wife

2.12

Shavings- connector white- indefinite bone-spoon

Ada nah wil waalsga hana'axga

and then do woman to down drop shavings white bone-spoon

and they seemed to move turning in the breeze they truly looked like maggots

The chief would leave the place where his wife lay sorely troubled

But in the night time secret came the woman's her lover and lay with her
things went on like this for a long time
Then one morning it was just at first light one of the great chief's nephews was going out to hunt seals

2.13
k'old- a لغوسلس- a 'wii sm'oogit
one indefinite nephew- indefinite great chief

... ada wil yaasga k'olda لغوسلسیسا 'wii
... when went one nephew great sm'oogit a dm woot.
chief to hunt-seals

he caught sight of a man coming out of the coffin of the chief's wife

2.14
na xpiis- a naks- a sm'oogit
discon coffin- indefinite wife- indefinite chief

... ksi yetga 'yuuta a na xpiisa naksa sm'oogit.
... out return man from coffin wife chief

He watched the man went that the man a ladder among the trees
where the chief's nephew saw was carrying suddenly he disappeared into the forest
The chief's decided he would keep watch over these things and see for himself what this one the place where his uncle's
nephew was doing who visited wife lay

2.15
naks- is nibiip- t
wife- proper name uncle- possessive

... dmt k'ap lip nii wila loo t'in ts'ilaaya
... to really himself see what do who visit
wil sgiusga naksis nibipt.
where lay wife uncle-his

... He stayed near
where the tree stood
where the woman lay
As soon as it was dark came the ladder lay "let me in, ghost!"

"For what other reason to be full of maggots?"

opened the coffin-box went in all night

first light in the morning saw went away Now the man that the woman he went and said "Well, uncle, is not dead!"

that man and climbed up to where the woman and said

Then the woman replied would I pretend

Then the woman and the man and lay with her

Just before the chief's nephew that the man from his uncle's wife knew was alive to his uncle and said "Well, uncle, is not dead!"

Wai biip atga dzaksga naks-n
Well uncle not dead wife-your

Then the man told his uncle what he had seen

The great chief was furious because his wife had deceived him a ladder he went he put the ladder up he struck and said, "Let me in, ghost!"

But the woman did not answer the voice because she did not recognize that spoke to her.

Again the chief spoke, "Let me in, ghost!"

made no answer And again the woman
the chief spoke
"If you do not open to me from where you are lying."
spoke pretend to be full of maggots?
the coffin-box that the woman to giving birth was so big

Now the third time he said, I will cast you down

Then at last the woman and said, "Why did I

Then she opened and the chief saw that the woman was close now that her belly

2.17
ban-t belly her

Adat niisda sm'oogit لا deplga dm 'waasga and saw chief now soon to give-birth hana'axga لا sm 'wiileeksa bant. woman now very big belly-her

When he saw what his wife had done he took his knife ...

2.18
na t'u'utsg-at
discon knife- his

Adat gyaasga na t'u'utsgat... and took knife-his

When he saw what his wife had done he took his knife in half And cut her body right at the her waist

2.19
na süülg- a txamoo- t
discon middle- indefinite body- her

Adat sm libagayt sga k'odza na süülgta txamoot and very right across cut middle body-her

When he saw what his wife had done he took his knife in half And cut her body right at the her waist so that she would at last be truly dead Then he left
Well just at the moment she gave birth she died to her child. This is why his mother's entrails she died to her child he suckled his mother's entrails.

2.20
na haats- ga noo- t
discon entrails- absent mother-his

Ada na haatsga noot 'niisga gan mmoot.
and - entrails mother-his this why he suckled

people something like a child of darkness they would try to follow him among into the forest where

At night time would notice who had the appearance coming out of the grave but he would disappear the trees and no one could see he had gone

3. Theoretical assumptions.

3.1 Minimalist model. I use the Minimalist Program (MP) theoretical model (Figure 2) in this paper. This model, developed out of the Government-Binding (GB) model (Figure 1), dispenses with the notions of D-structure and S-structure.

![Figure 1. GB model.](image1.png)

![Figure 2. MP model.](image2.png)

It assumes a universal X-bar theoretic computational system (Figure 3) into which lexical items, with their subcategorization frames and theta-role assignments, are inserted and then
Figure 3. Partial X-bar theoretic construction for sentences.

Projected into phrases and clauses. Lexical items are fully inflected in the lexicon. Movement, or rather copy-deletion, procedures are devices to check the morphology of a construction: word-order and inflection. Word order movement (upward copying) comes earlier and is necessary in the construction of Phonetic Form (PF). Only the highest copy of an entity will have phonetic shape. When the process of morphological inflection checking begins to distort PF word order, then the construction is said to have passed a point in its derivation called spell-out. Movement after spell-out occurs to show such things as quantifier scope, as is necessary in the construction of Logical Form (LF).

The AGR and T phrases are devices to check the inflection of the lexical items in the construction. In an SVO language, no movement is required before spell-out. In a VSO language, such as Coast Tsimshian, V movement occurs before spell-out, thus giving the proper PF word order (See Figure 4).

Figure 4. V adjoins T before spell-out.
3.2 **Determiner phrases.** I assume that NPs are the complements to phrasal heads called determiners, and that possessor NPs are the specifiers in determiner phrases (DP). I assume further that it is desirable to view the X-bar construction of a DP as analogous to that of a sentence, i.e., that the possessor NP/DP should be analogous to a sentence subject, the determiner head (D) analogous to a sentence verb, and the possessed NP/DP analogous to a sentence object (Figure 5). Determiner heads are either simple, i.e., "intransitive," or, if they have a possessive, "transitive."

The great chief loved his wife.
the great chief 's love for his wife

The difficulty in Coast Tsimshian is that the word orders for sentences and possessive constructions are not analogous. The

order of subject and object is the reverse of the order for possessor and possessed (Figure 6).

![Figure 6. Sentence and possessive word order asymmetry.](image)

4. **Analysis.** Coast Tsimshian has intransitive and transitive determiner heads. The transitive determiner heads assign theta-possessor role to their specifiers.

4.1 **Intransitive determiner.** The intransitive determiner has no phonetic shape and assigns no theta roles (cf. Figure 7):

\( \emptyset \)
4.2 Transitive determiners. There are two transitive determiner heads. Both assign theta-possessor role to their specifier (Figure 8). One has no phonetic realization, the other has the phonetic shape [næ], represented by the orthographic 'na.'

\[
\begin{align*}
&\emptyset \ [\_\text{NP}] (\_, \text{possessed}) \\
&\text{na} \ [\_\text{NP}] (\_, \text{possessed})
\end{align*}
\]

4.2.1 The 'na' determiner. The type of possession the 'na' determiner names is one of disconnectedness. The possessed item is either not an intrinsic part of the possessor or it has been separated from the possessor, even if it is/was an intrinsic part of the possessor such as a body part. This determiner is not simply an agreement or classifier morpheme, but is used creatively, sometimes for great dramatic/poetic effect.

It occurs in eight different constructions in this text (Table 1). Ordinary separateness is to be seen in the woman's coffin (2.14) and in the chief's knife (2.18). But this possessor determiner is used to special effect in the other instances. The woman is separated from her secret lover (2.3, 2.8a, 2.8b).
because their love is ill-fated and they will be lost to each other. The top of the spruce tree (2.14) in which her coffin is placed is disconnected from the rest of the tree just as this world of the living separated from the (sky) world of the dead. Her body (2.5) is separated from her in the context of her (feigned) death. Her waist (2.19) is disconnected from her when her husband butchers her, cutting her in two. The slain mother is separated from her own entrails (2.20) that nourish her orphaned newborn son, forever lost to her.

4.2.2 The unmarked possessive determiner. Table 2. Lists the unmarked possessive constructions, i.e., those wherein there is an intrinsic connection between possessor and possessed and wherein the notion of "possession" is really a natural connection rather than an act of state of ownership. Intrinsically connected relationships include one's own heart (2.6, 2.7) and belly (2.17), the river's mouth (2.1), a box and its outside (2.10), a nephew and his uncle (2.13), a wife and her husband (2.2, 2.9, 2.11, 2.15, 2.16). The unusual construction here is 2.12 wherein the shavings from a bone spoon, a grave good, let float down from the coffin to imitate maggots, are considered connected to the spoon from whence they came, a communication, a connection, between the world of the living and the world of the dead.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>D</th>
<th>possessed</th>
<th>infl</th>
<th>possessor</th>
<th>infl?</th>
<th>infl</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>na sii’pns-</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>pro</td>
<td></td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>na ts’üwaan</td>
<td>ø</td>
<td>‘wii sa’mn-t</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>na sami</td>
<td>ø</td>
<td>naks-t</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>na xplis-</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>naksa sm’oogit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>na t’u’u’tsg-</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>pro</td>
<td></td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>na süülg-</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>txamoo-t</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>na haats-</td>
<td>ga</td>
<td>noo-t</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Disconnected possession.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>D</th>
<th>possessed</th>
<th>infl</th>
<th>possessor</th>
<th>infl?</th>
<th>infl</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>ø sūū</td>
<td>ø</td>
<td>kluusms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>ø naks-</td>
<td>ø</td>
<td>pro</td>
<td></td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>ø goot-</td>
<td>sga</td>
<td>‘wii sm’oogit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>ø goot-</td>
<td>sga</td>
<td>pro</td>
<td></td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>ø naks-</td>
<td>ø</td>
<td>sm’oogit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>ø kwtuun-</td>
<td>sga</td>
<td>xplis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>ø naks-</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>hana’ax-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>ø Saalbm nosp-</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>wiu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>ø k’olda Egwissliis-</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>‘wii sm’oogit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>ø naks-</td>
<td>is</td>
<td>nibiip-t</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>ø naks-</td>
<td>ø</td>
<td>pro</td>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>ø ban-</td>
<td>ø</td>
<td>pro</td>
<td></td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Unmarked "possession."
4.3 The inflection of the possessed NP. NPs are inflected for distance vs. presence, and, in the presence of a pro possessor, to show person-number agreement. The possessor NPs do not receive inflection.

4.3.1 Distance inflection. A series of suffixes (often called connectives in the Tsimshianic literature) indicates presence (-da, -sda), absence (-ga, -sga), or indeterminate (-ø, -a). The distinction between absent and indeterminate distance is analogous to the distinction between disconnected possession and unmarked or intrinsic “possession.” The possessor determiners and the NP inflectors can be made to interact for dramatic effect. The -sga suffix indicates distance in 2.6 and 2.10 which both have unmarked possessive determiners.

2.6 \( \emptyset \) goot- sga `wii sm’oogit
D heart absent great chief

The heart of the great chief is so troubled by the death of his wife that he contemplates suicide. The narrator distances himself, indicating that the chief’s heart is far away, close to being lost.

2.10 \( \emptyset \) kwuun- sga xpiis
D outside absent coffin-box

This is the outside of the coffin-box which the secret lover strikes as he addresses the “ghost” inside. The narrator places the outside of the coffin-box at some distance from the inside, calling attention to the distance between the world inside and the world outside the woman’s resting place.

The -ga suffix interacts with a ‘na’ possessor determiner in one construction:

2.20 \( \text{na haats- ga noot} \)
 disconnected entrails absent his-mother.

This expression is the most poignant, emphasising the separation between the dismembered mother and her new-born child, who must suckle her disgorged entrails in order to survive.

4.4 Movement before spell-out. The determiner must move in order to check its features: (1) transitive vs. intransitive, i.e., possessive construction versus simple determiner, and (2) disconnected, true possession vs. intrinsic connection. Likewise the possessed NP must move in order to check its inflection: absent vs. present.

4.4.1 The transitive determiner phrase before movement. I assume that the X-bar theoretic construction for a DP has a superordinate POSS phrase analogous to TP in a sentence construction. I also assume that the DP construction has another phrase (X) that is complement to POSSP and superordinate to DP, thus analogous to AGRoP in a sentence construction (Fig. 9).

4.4.2 The transitive determiner phrase at spell-out. The Determiner head adjoins the POSS head in order to check its morphological features, just as a verb adjoins T. In Coast Tsimshian this must occur before spell-out in order to give the correct PF word order. The possessed NP/DP will move into the empty specifier to X position, just as the object must must into
the AGRoP after spell-out. The movement in a possessive construction, however, must also occur before spell-out in order to give the proper PF word order (Figure 10).

4.4.3 Sentence and determiner construction at spell-out. The Coast Tsimshian PF word order is VSO, indicating that only V raising occurs before spell-out. In the possessive determiner phrase construction, Coast Tsimshian syntax requires that both the determiner and the possessed NP/DP raise before spell-out.

4.4.4 Conclusion. A minimalist approach to Coast Tsimshian syntax lays bare the desired analogy between different phrasal constructions, i.e., the universality of the X-bar theoretic computational system. Specifically the Coast Tsimshian Sentence (AGRsP) and Determiner Phrase (POSSP) can be usefully characterized by directly analogous X-bar structures. The only difference between the two is that object raising must occur after spell-out in the sentence while the possessed NP/DP must be raised before spell-out.
SOURCES


