

Variation and Change in Argument Realization  
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# Possessive Predicates from Archaic Latin to the Romance Languages: an Issue of Topicality and Word Order?

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# Cross-linguistic mismatch of possessive constructions

1. *John san ni wa kuruma ga aru.*  
John HON DAT TOP bag SUBJ exist.  
'John **has** a car.'

2. *John san wa kaban o motte iru.*  
John HON TOP bag OBJ holding AUX  
'John **has** a bag.'

3. *John san wa ane ga futari iru.*  
John HON TOP sister SUBJ two exist  
'John **has** two sisters.'

4. *John san wa pinku no kami o shite iru.*  
John HON TOP pink GEN hair OBJ doing AUX  
*John **has** pink hair.*

# Semantic definition of possession according to Taylor (1996)

1. The Pr is a specific human being.
2. The Pe is an inanimate entity, usually a concrete physical object.
3. The possessive relation is exclusive, i.e. there can be one Pr to many Pe, but not vice versa.
4. The Pr has the exclusive rights to access the Pe.
5. Pe is an object of value, commercial or sentimental.
6. The Pr's rights on the Pe are produced by some special transaction (purchase, gift, inheritance or the like).
7. It is a long term relation.
8. The Pe is located in the proximity of the Pr.

# Multi-factor definition of possession

I. The **coexistence** of two objects (Pr and Pe)  
must be predicated

# Existence expressed by possessive predicates

- French  
*il y a* 'there is' (lit. 'he there has')
- Spanish  
*hay* < \**ha* y 'there is' (lit. 'has there')
- Russian  
*imeetsja* 'there is'  
(lit. reflexive/passive of *imet'* 'to have')

# Multi-factor definition of possession

1. The **coexistence** of two objects (Pr and Pe) must be predicated
2. Pr and Pe must be at the opposite ends of the **animacy hierarchy**

# Possible semantic characterizations of Pr and Pe

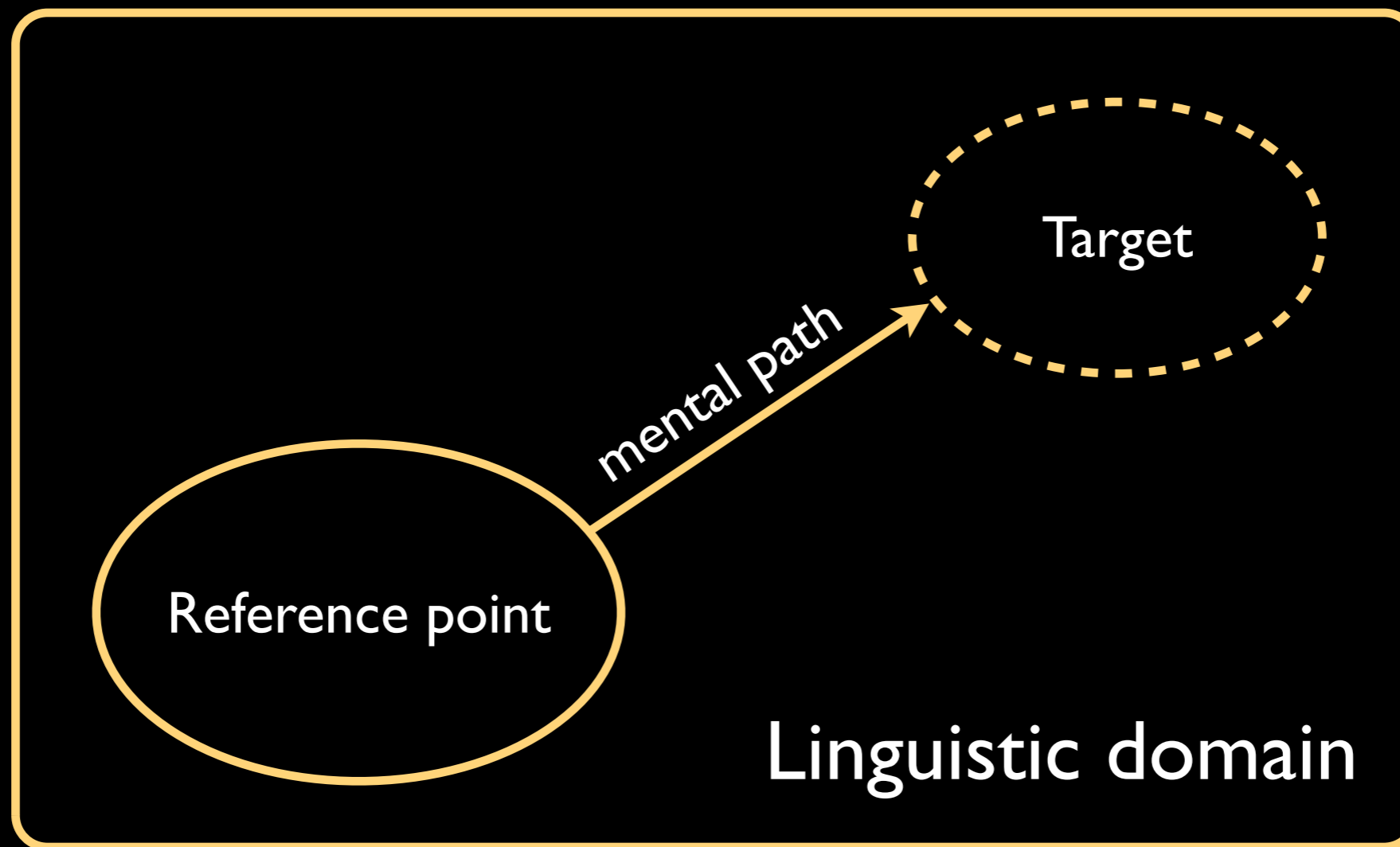
Russian	Italian
<i>U menja est' kniga.</i> near me-GEN is book-NOM 'I have a book'.	<i>Io ho un libro.</i> I have a book 'I have a book'
<i>U menja dva brata.</i> near me-GEN two brother-DUAL 'I have two brother'.	<i>Io ho due fratelli.</i> I have two brothers 'I have two brothers'
<i>U menja gripp.</i> near me-GEN flu-NOM 'I've got the flu'.	<i>Io ho l'influenza.</i> I have the flu 'I've got the flu'.
<i>Mne xolodno</i> me-DAT cold 'I am cold'	<i>Io ho freddo.</i> i have cold 'I am cold'.

# Multi-factor definition of possession

1. The **coexistence** of two objects (Pr and Pe) must be predicated
2. Pr and Pe must be at the opposite ends of the **animacy hierarchy**
3. The Pr constituent must be **topicalized**



# Possession within Langacker's (2001) *reference point model*



# *to have*: no passivization allowed

English

\* *The book is had by me.*

(OK: *The book belongs to me*)

# *belong*-construction in French

- *J'ai un livre.*  
I have a book  
'I have a book'  
(Pr is Topic, Pe is indefinite)
- *Le livre est à moi.*  
the book is to me  
'The book belongs to me'  
(Pe is Topic and definite)

# Definition

When there are two elements **A** and **B**, such that **A has B**, what we really state is that they **exist** in the same place and time, that **A** is far **more animate** than **B**, and that **A** is a good **reference point** for creating a mental path that brings us to a previously indeterminate or unknown target object **B**.

# Four types of possessive constructions (Stassen 2009)

- Loc-possessive: *to Pr there si Pe*
- With-possessive: *Pr is with Pe*
- Top-possessive: *as for Pr, Pe exists*
- Have-possessive: *Pr has Pe*

# Locational possessive

- Locative/existential predicate, roughly 'to be'.
- The Pe is constructed as the grammatical subject of the predicate, with all subject's morphosyntactic privileges, such as verb agreement control, nominative case marking.
- The Pr is constructed as an oblique or adverbial NP, marked by case ending or adpositions.

# Locational possessive constructions

- Japanese

*Ano onna ni wa jibun no kane ga aru.*

that **woman** **DAT** TOP self GEN **money** **SUBJ** **EXIST**

‘That woman has money of her own’.

- Latin

*Huic filia una est.*

**this-DAT** **daughter-NOM** one **is-3sg**

‘This man has only one daughter’.

(Plautus, *Aulularia* 23)

# Have-possessive

- The construction contains a transitive predicate
- The Pr is constructed as the subject not unlike the agent argument
- The Pe is constructed as the direct object similarly to the patient argument.



# Life cycle of a possessive construction (form)



# Example of transitivity: Japanese loc-possessives

- The control of the animacy alternation of the verb by subject-like *Pe* is blocked (normally, *iru* is selected by animate subjects and *aru* by inanimate)
- The scrambling is blocked: the *Pr* stays always at the initial position
- *Pr*'s oblique marker *ni* is omissible

# Example of transitivity: Japanese loc-possessives

*Taroo ni kodomo ga aru.*

Taroo DAT child SUBJ exist

‘Taroo has a child’.

*Asoko ni ie ga aru/\*iru.*

there DAT house SUBJ exist

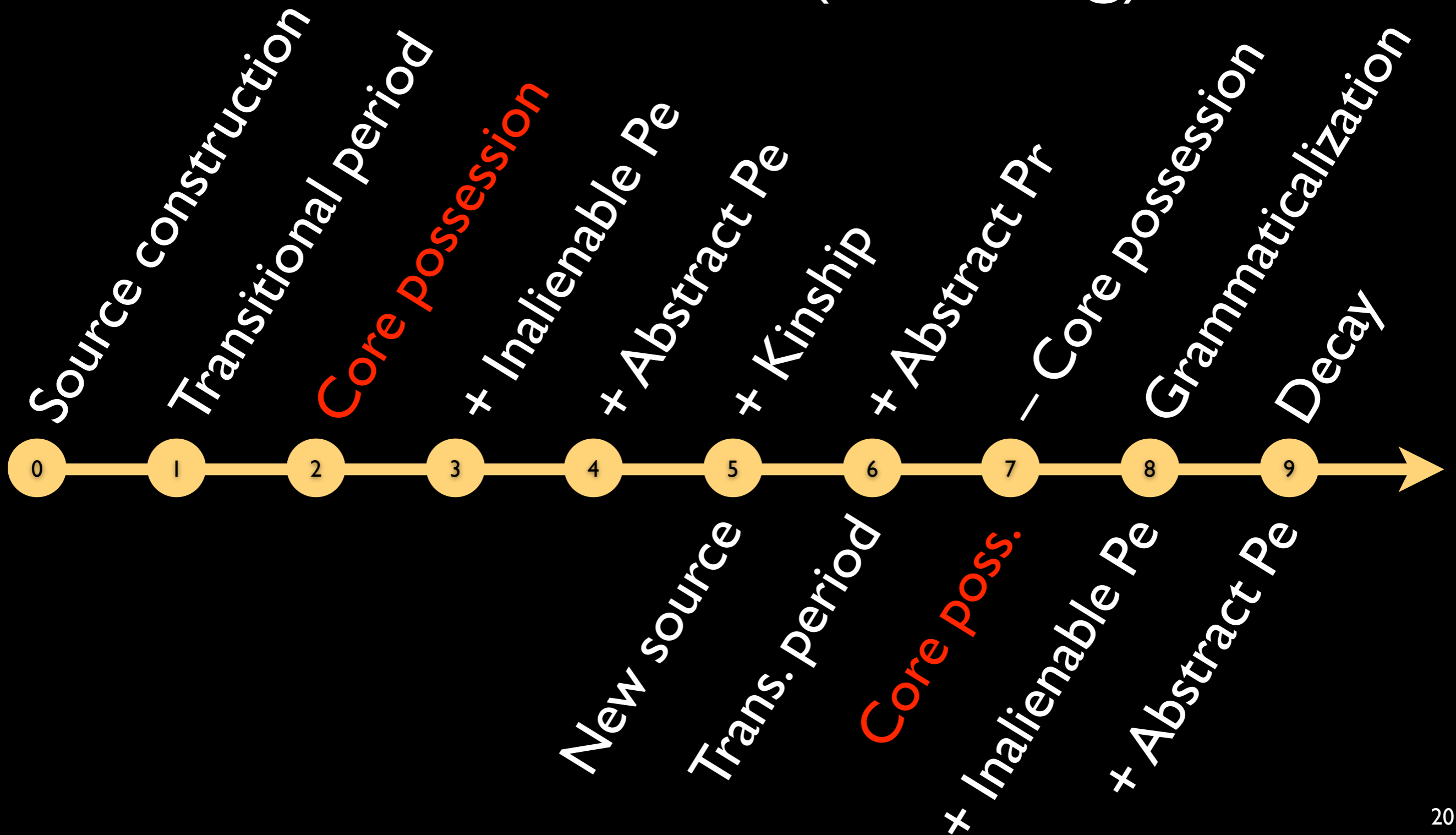
‘There is a house over there’.

*Ie ni kodomo ga \*aru/iru.*

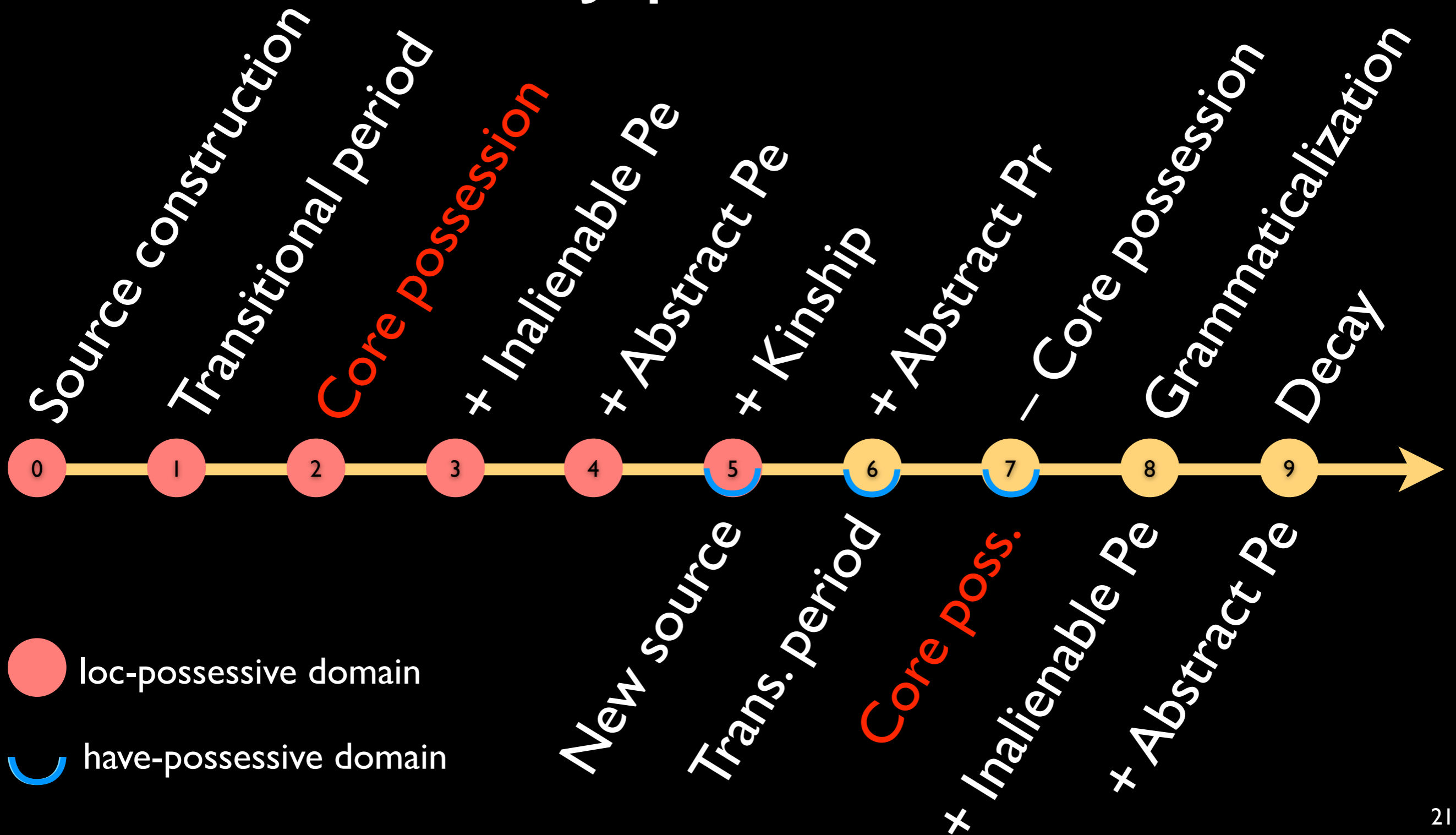
house DAT child SUBJ exist

‘There is a child in the house’.

# Life cycle of a possessive construction (meaning)



# Two possessive constructions in Japanese



# A model of the diachronic drift of possessives

- Once the original **meaning** of the source construction has been obscured or totally deleted, the new possessive construction starts to gradually expand its meaning to cover less and less prototypical referents.
- As for **grammar**, the general tendency is towards the predicativization and transitivity of the possessive construction. The end point of this process is the rise of a lexicalized possessive predicate.
- Eventually, the equilibrium breaks, and a new construction is shaped, which, after a possible period of **complementary distribution**, replaces completely the outdated one.

# Possible causes of the loss of a possessive construction

The possessive construction is replaced by a new one if one of the condition of the prototypical possession is not fulfilled anymore, for instance:

- The predicate does not clearly express the coexistence anymore
- The humanness of the Pr is not guaranteed anymore
- The topicalization of the Pr is not automatic

# Situation in Latin

- Two concurrent possessive constructions: *mihi est* (loc-possessive) and *habeo* (have-possessive)
- The latter eventually prevailed and is the only one surviving in the Romance languages (the expression of ‘belonging’ in French is not a direct descendant of Latin *mihi est*)



# *mihi est* construction

- The expression of coexistence was assured by the use of a verb of existence
- The high level of animacy was assured by the fact that this construction strongly favored pronominal Prs
- The topicalization of Pr was assured by putting the dative marked pronoun at the initial position or, at least, before the Pe

# Origin of *habeo*: i.-e. \**ghabh-* ‘seize’

- Old Irish *gaibid* ‘he catches, takes’
- Sanskrit *gábhasti-* ‘hand’
- Latin *inhibeo* ‘I retain’

# Diachronic replacement of *mihi est* with *habeo* (Nutti 2005)

		<i>mihi est</i>	<i>habeo</i>
Plautus	born c. 254 B.C.	38,7%	61,3%
Terence	195/185 – c. 159 B.C.	30,5%	69,5%
Cato, <i>De agri cultura</i>	234 – 149 B.C.	4,2%	95,8%
Cicero, <i>Epistulae</i>	106 – 43 B.C.	10,5%	89,5%
Caesar, <i>De bello gallico</i>	100 – 44 B.C.	6,9%	93,1%
Petronius	c. 27 – 66 A.D.	2,1%	97,9%

# Grammaticalization of *habeo* in the Romance Languages

- Standard Italian  
*Farò.*  
'I will do' (< Proto-Romance \**facere habeo*)
- *Ho fatto.*  
Have-I sg do-PPP  
'I have done' (< Late Latin *habeo factum*)
- Contemporary Italian  
*Ho da fare.*  
have-I sg by do  
'I have to do'

Why did *habeo* prevail?

# Informational structure coding in Latin

- In non-emotive contexts (declarative sentences without emphasis) the Topic precedes the Rheme
- In emotive contexts (sentences with focused or emphatic constituents) the Focus/Rheme preceded the Topic

# Chronology of Latin

- Old Latin: 240 – 81 B.C. (Republic)
- Classical Latin: 81 B.C. – 200 A.D.
  - Golden: 81 B.C. – 14 A.D. (Caesar and August)
  - Silver: (Tiberius to Trajan)
- Late: from V cent. A.D. onwards

# Solution

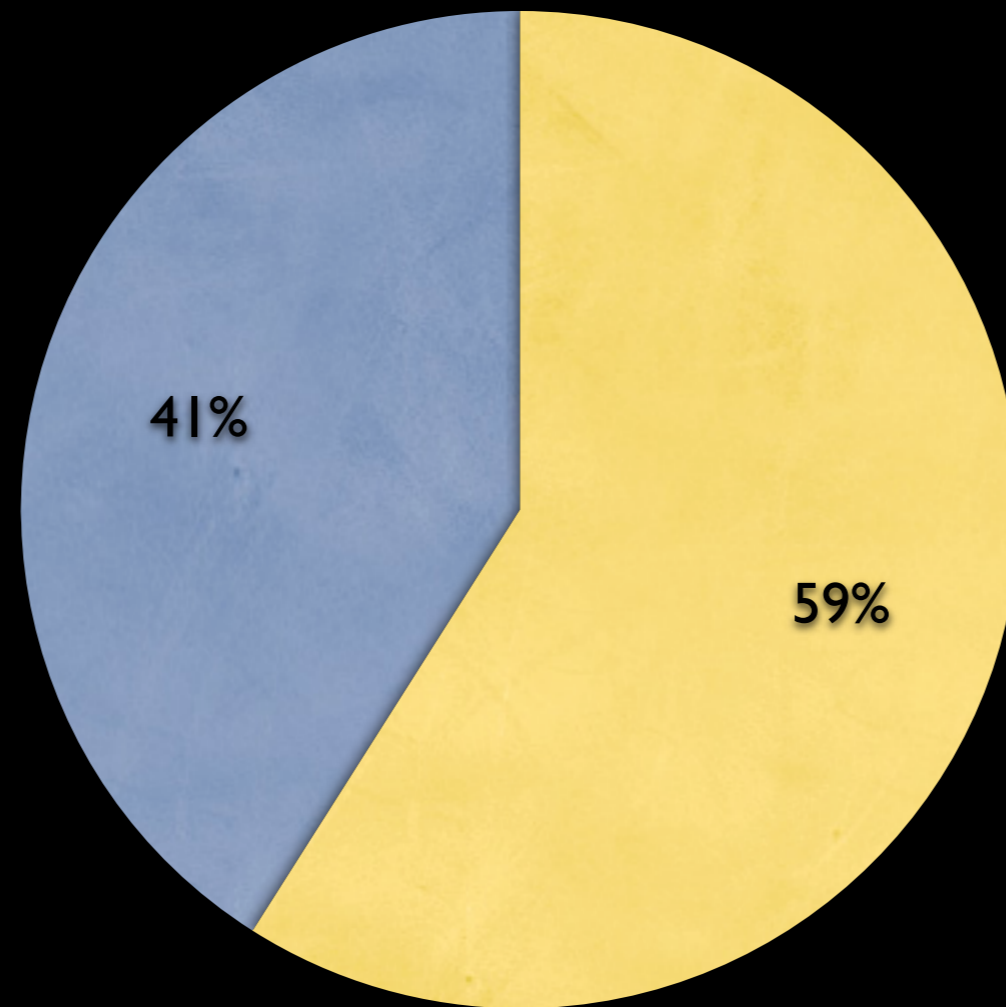
The change of possessive construction type observable in the history of Latin is due to a gradual decay of word order flexibility.



# The *mihi est* construction in Plautus

<i>word order type</i>	<i>percent</i>
Pr Pe V	33,9%
Pr V Pe	18,5%
V Pr Pe	5,7%
Pe Pr V	21,4%
Pe V Pr	15,2%
V Pe Pr	5,4%

# Word order in the *mihi est* construction



- Pr precedes Pe
- Pe precedes Pr

# Interrogative *mihi est*: left dislocation of Pe

Plautus, *Menaechmi*, 826

[...] *quid mihi tecum est?*

what me-DAT you-WITH is

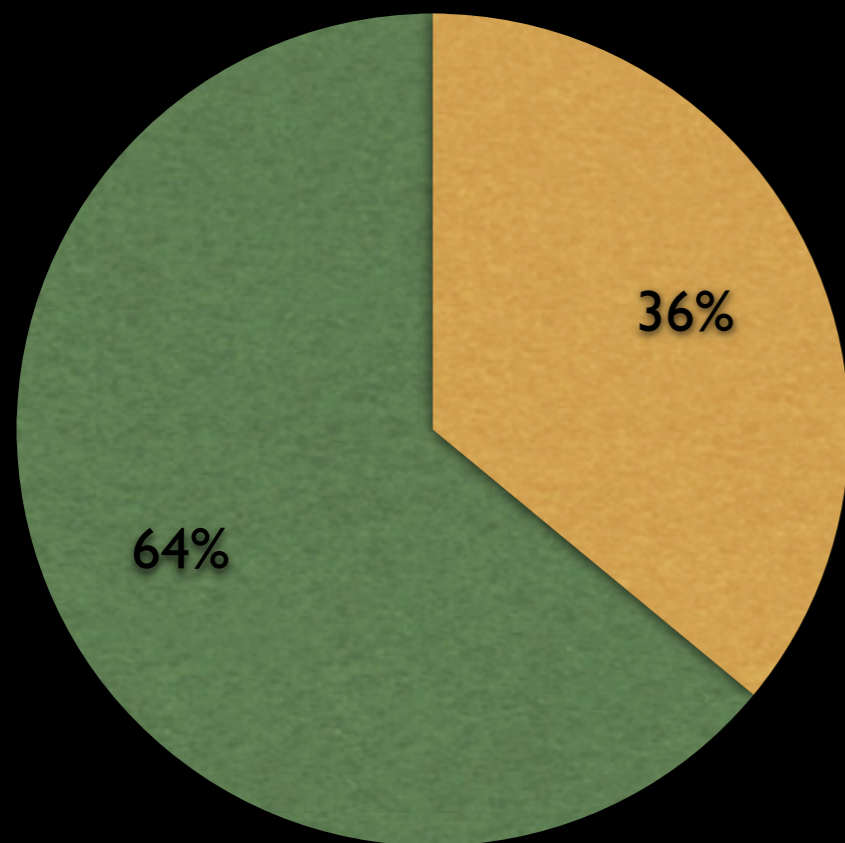
‘What do you have to do with me?’

# Disaggregated data

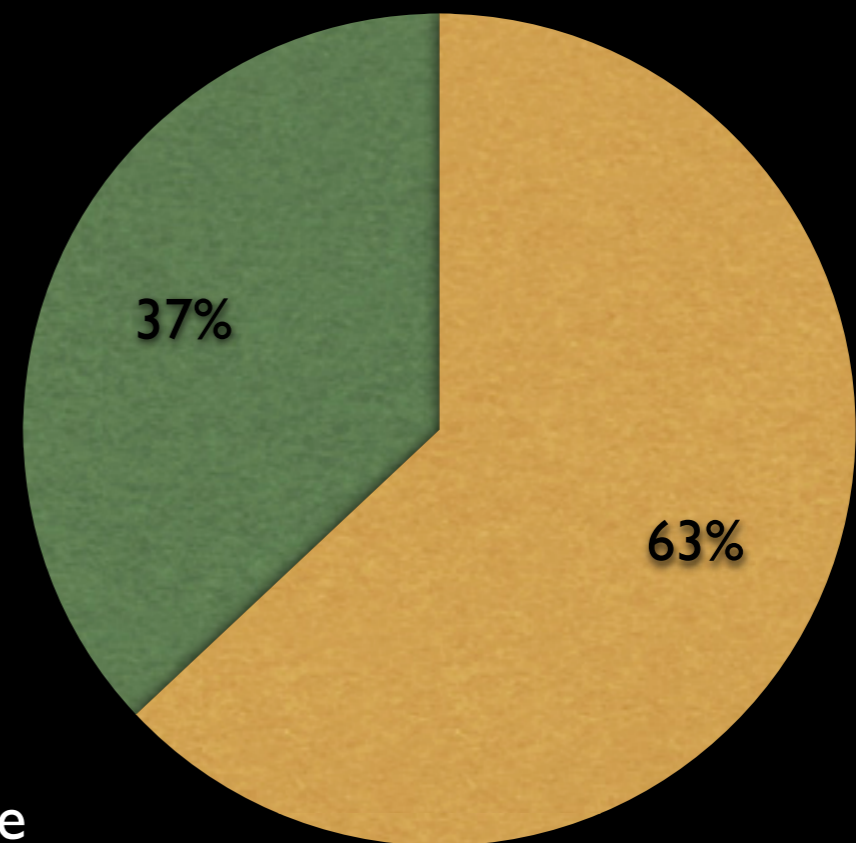
	<i>word order type</i>	<i>percent</i>
Interrogative sentences	Pr precedes Pe	36%
	Pe precedes Pr	64%
Declarative sentences	Pr precedes Pe	63%
	Pe precedes Pr	37%

# Disaggregated data

Interrogative sentences



Declarative sentences



- Pr precedes Pe
- Pe precedes Pr

# Word order and possessive constructions (Bakker 1998)

<i>languages</i>	<i>flexibility index</i>	<i>possessive type</i>
Latin → Average Romance	0.9 → 0.24	Loc, Have → Have
Classical → Modern Armenian	0.8 → 0.4	Loc → Have
Gothic → Average Germanic	0.7 → 0.42	Loc → Have
Classical → Modern Greek	0.6 → 0.6	Loc, Have → Have
Old Church Slavonic → Russian	0.5 → 0.7	Have → Loc

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