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SOME OBSERVATIONS ON ENGLISH PREPOSITIONAL POSSESSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS*

1 INTRODUCTION

It is a fundamental task for a theory of lexical semantics to determine what effect our knowledge of the lexicon has on our knowledge of syntax. Many recent studies have been focusing on how the syntactic properties of verbs are determined by their semantic structure, especially on the tendency for arguments bearing certain semantic roles to be associated with particular syntactic expressions (cf. Jackendoff 1990, Levin and Rappaport Hovav 1995, Rappaport Hovav and Levin 1998, Tenny 1994, Wechsler 1995 among many others). The present study, however, casts some light upon adjuncts, specifically those that are mapped from the semantic structure of nominals. The phenomena discussed here are a type of adjuncts, namely prepositional possessive constructions. The most typical examples are shown in (1).

(1) a. friend of Adam
    b. father of the bride

(Chapman 1975)

The preposition of appears to express the possessive relation between friend and Adam in (1a), and between father and the bride in (1b). In these expressions, a prepositional phrase functions as a possessive expression. We call this expression an “of-possessive” (henceforth of-poss).

However, the preposition to also seems to express the possessive relation, as illustrated in (2).

(2) a. friend to Adam
    b. father to the bride

(ibid.)

In these examples, the possessive relation between friend and Adam in (2a), and between father and the bride in (2b) is expressed by the preposition to, instead of of as

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We call this expression “to-possessive” (henceforth to-poss).\(^1\)

If both of these expressions indicate the identical relation, one may wonder whether there is any difference. In fact, Wilson and Mushiaki (1971) state that there is not much semantic difference while “(a to-poss) is more common today in American English.” However, we shall see later in this study that the data reveal clear distinctions in meaning and usage between the two types of prepositional possessive expressions. It will also be shown that the choice of preposition is motivated by the semantics of the head nominal, that is, friend in (1) and (2). The purpose of this article is to clarify how the nominals semantically select the prepositions to head the possessive prepositional phrases, in the framework of Generative Lexicon Theory (GL) with some modification.

The organisation of this article is as follows. We first observe some properties of the of-poss and the to-poss while reviewing some previous analyses of these constructions, and then point out a couple of problems that these analyses encounter, suggesting the necessity of an analysis from the viewpoint of lexical semantics. In Section 3 we introduce the general framework of GL. In order to characterise the prepositional possessive constructions more appropriately, in Section 4 we shall further introduce the concept of “primary qualia role.” Based on the theoretical preliminaries introduced in Section 3 and 4, we shall make a proposal concerning the function of the of-poss and the to-poss in Section 5. Section 6 then explores how the proposal can solve the problems posed in Section 2. In Section 7 we discuss other consequences that follow from the present account of the prepositional possessives. In Section 8 we shall summarise the discussion in this article.

2 PROPERTIES OF PREPOSITIONAL POSSESSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS AND PREVIOUS STUDIES

The prepositional possessive constructions have been touched from time to time but never been seriously explored. However, at least three linguists, Wood (1967), Konishi (1974, 1976) and Chapman (1975) have touched upon the constructions from a descriptive point of view. This section considers how the to-poss and the of-poss are used in the noun phrase, while reviewing these studies.


Wood (1967) and Konishi (1974, 1976) choose some prepositional possessive constructions to highlight the difference in meaning between the to-poss and the of-poss. Konishi (1976) describes the meaning contrast between the two constructions below.

\(^1\) The terms of-poss and to-poss are applied to the possessive prepositional phrases, whereas the noun phrase that include them are named “of-poss expression” and “to-poss expression,” respectively.
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(3) a. the door of the room  
b. the door to the room  

(Konishi 1976)

Konishi states that in the case of (3a) the speaker construes the door as part of the room, while (5b) can be paraphrased as “the door leading to the room.” The following serve as examples to confirm this observation.

(4) a. They kept newspaper cuttings on how dangerous the streets were, and stuck them to the door of the fridge with little magnets.  

(BNC: F9C 3321)

b. Dolly made herself heard again, having swung herself off the bed to hop to the door of the room.  

(BNC: GKE 1394)

c. The door of the plane opened and a man in white came out.  

(BNC: GW5 1082)

Konishi’s description correctly captures the use of the of-pos in these examples. The door in (4a) is merely a place to which the cuttings are stuck, so that there is no possibility of paraphrasing to “the door leading to the fridge.” In (4b) the whole event occurs in the girl’s bedroom. Therefore the door in this case does not lead to the bedroom, but it functions as a way out of it. In (4c) the door is what the man came out of, but not what he entered, as the underlined part shows. These examples support Konishi’s (1967) statement since the door in these sentences does not obtain the “leading to” interpretation, and is understood merely as a part of the whole thing.

Wood (1967) states that friend is normally followed by of, as in friend of Adam, while the to-pos is used in the following condition:

(5) a friend to is used when the reference is to one who shows a friendly attitude or acts in a friendly way by giving practical assistance, support or sympathy to whoever or whatever is specified.  

(Wood 1967)

By way of illustration of this point, let us consider the following examples.

(6) a. You’ve been friend to me and you’ve got to help now — you’ve just got to.  

(ECME: T. Dixon, The Foolish Virgin)

b. The moon which had proved a friend to her by remaining hidden behind a bank of clouds, now emerged in all the glory of an early autumn night, and in a moment flooded the weird and lonely landscape with a rush of brilliant light.  

(ECME: E. Orezy, The Scarlet Pimpernel)

The parts in bold face in the examples above indicate that friend is the one who does something beneficial to the person in the complement position of to. These
examples support the statement cited in (5).

Thus, Konishi (1976) and Wood (1967) have made it clear that the to-poss and the of-poss have different interpretations, as illustrated by (3)–(6), although the prepositional phrases seem identical in meaning at the first approximation. This leads us to the question of what causes the difference in meaning between the to-poss and the of-poss.

2.2 Chapman (1975)

Chapman (1975) has made it clear that the to-poss has more restricted use than the of-poss. He states that the possessive relation expressed by the to-poss appears to be restricted to three subtypes. Let us consider each of the uses in turn.

The first type is the possession of personal relations, for which the to-poss is most commonly used, according to Chapman. This type is illustrated in (7).

(7) a. She is aunt to George and Bill, and cousin to Herb and Avery
     b. friend to Adam

There is a personal relation between the two elements on either sides of to, such as aunt and her nephew in (7a), and Adam and his friend in (7b). The second type is the part-whole relation, which, according to Chapman (1975), is the least frequently used.

(8) a. handle to the broom
     b. key to the lock
     c. gate to the castle

The element before to constitutes a part of the thing after it. (8a) denotes, for example, that the handle is a part of the broom. Thirdly, the to-poss is used to express a serving relationship.

(9) a. vintner to Her Majesty the Queen
     b. executive assistant to the president
     c. aide to the general
     d. husband to the star
     e. printer to the University

In (9), the person described as the head nominal in some way serves what is described in the complement of to.

The classification made by Chapman (1975) is not exhaustive, however. Let us consider the data listed in (10). They can be regarded as expressing almost the same relation as the ones in (7)–(9).

(10) a. i. father {*to/of} his country
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ii. father {*to/of} the idea

b. i. corner {*to/of} the table
   ii. redness {*to/of} the skin
   iii. size {*to/of} the apple

c. president {*to/of} the college

In (10a) the concept of kinship relation seems to remain still in this metaphorical use of father. Corner, redness and size in (10b) can be regarded as part of the object in the complement position of to. President in (10c) is not in the serving relationship with the college in the strict sense of the word, but, compared with the examples in (9), it is difficult to define precisely what prevents this word from occurring in the to-poss expression.

Thus, the examples in (10) with the to-poss are impossible though they can be thought as indicating almost the same relations as the ones in (7)–(9). Now a question arises as to what causes the difference between (7)–(9) and (10) concerning the acceptability of the to-poss.

2.3 Conclusion

We have observed so far the properties of the two types of prepositional possessive constructions, the to-poss and the of-poss. From these observations one general point becomes clear: each type of prepositional possessive puts focus on distinct aspects of the meaning of the head nominal. It is possible to say that in the case of the to-poss expression the focus is more on the functional aspect of the head nominal, while the of-poss expression has a more neutral or basic interpretation. This consideration leads to the prospect that semantics of the head nominal could determine the selection of preposition. This motivates the lexical semantic analysis on the head nominal. In order to make such an analysis, we need a model which provides lexical semantic representations detailed enough to describe the semantic difference of the nominals discussed above. Also necessary is a mechanism which captures the mapping relationship between the meaning of the nominal and its syntactic realisations. Generative Lexicon Theory (GL), outlined in Pustejovsky (1991, 1995) and Pustejovsky and Boguraev (1993), provides such a model. In the next section, we review some of the basic assumptions of the framework of GL, and then in Section 4 we shall make a modification on this model.

3 LEXICAL SEMANTIC REPRESENTATIONS IN GENERATIVE LEXICON THEORY

GL can be characterised as a system involving at least the following four levels of representation.
(11) a. **Argument structure:** Specification of number and type of logical arguments.

b. **Event structure:** Definition of the event type of an expression and its subeventual structure.

c. **Qualia structure:** A structural differentiation of the predicative force for a lexical item.

d. **Lexical inheritance structure:** Identification of how a lexical structure is related to other structures in the type lattice.

(Pustejovsky 1998)

In this article, however, we add to the list another level of representation specifically for the semantics of the nominals, namely, the type structure, following the notation by Busa and Johnston (1996). Given this system, the lexical entry of the noun *knife*, for example, can be represented as in (12).²

(12) \[
\text{knife} \\
\text{TYPESTR} = [\text{ARG1} = x: \text{artifact_tool}] \\
\text{ARGSTR} = \\
\quad [\text{D-ARG1} = y: \text{phys_obj}] \\
\quad [\text{D-ARG2} = w: \text{creature}] \\
\quad [\text{D-ARG3} = z: \text{creature}] \\
\text{QUALIA} = \\
\quad \text{CONST} = \{\text{blade, handle, \ldots}\} \\
\quad \text{TELIC} = \text{cut_act}(e_2, w, x, y) \\
\quad \text{AGENTIVE} = \text{make_act}(e_1, z, x)
\]

(cf. Busa and Johnston 1996)

The type structure (TYPESTR) is a level for representing the type of word. The type structure of *knife* specifies that the meaning of this noun is typed as an artefact and a tool. The argument structure (ARGSTR) lists arguments that appear in the qualia structure, except for those listed in the type structure. The argument structure for the noun *knife* specifies that this noun selects for three default arguments, that is, those arguments which are mapped to the syntax optionally, namely the first for physical object (D-ARG1), the second and the third for creature (D-ARG2 and D-ARG3, respectively). The qualia structure (QUALIA) encodes the basic semantic characteristics of a word, and expresses the following four aspects of the meaning of the lexical item.

(13) a. **FORMAL:** the basic category that distinguishes an object within a larger domain;

² For the purpose of this article, we will simplify the structure to include the first three of the levels of representation listed in (11).
b. CONSTITUTIVE: the relation between an object and its constituent parts;
c. TELIC: the object's purpose and function;
d. AGENTIVE: factors involved in the object's origin or "coming into being."

(Pustejovsky 1998)

The formal role of knife shares the value with ARG1 of the type structure.³ The constitutive role indicates that a knife is composed of such parts as blade, handle and so on. The telic role denotes that a knife is generally used for cutting; cut_act(e₂, w, x, y) says that the cutting activity is carried out by w towards y by using x. The agentive qualia role states that a knife is produced by "activity of making," namely z makes x.

4 A PRIMARY QUALIA ROLE

In this section we shall modify part of the lexical semantics model in GL by introducing the concept of the primary qualia role. This notion can be defined as the qualia role that is central in the interpretation of the noun phrase which the word enters. For example, consider the meaning of the adjective-plus-noun structures below.

(14) a. i. a long knife
   ii. a good knife
b. i. a young mother
   ii. a good mother
c. i. a red car
   ii. a good car

All of these phrases are nominals in which the adjectives modify the nouns. However, there is a difference between (i) and (ii) in the mode of modifying the noun. In (i)-phrases the adjectives long, young and red actually modify the formal qualia role of the noun while in (ii) the adjective good modifies the telic role of the same noun. Consider the qualia structures of these nouns.

³ The same letters in the representation indicate that they are all shared.
The adjectives long, young and red modify the value of the formal role in these structures, namely, X, which is bound by X:human in the type structure. By this process the nominal a long knife in (14ai), for example, acquires the interpretation “a knife that is long.” The adjective good modifies the event expressed in the telic role in the above representation. Therefore, (14aia) a good knife has the meaning “a knife that cuts well,” (14aib) a good car “a car that someone can drive well” and (14aii) a good mother “a mother that brings up her son/daughter well.” In (i)-phrases the primary qualia role is the formal role while in (ii)-phrases it is the telic role.

The primary qualia role thus provides the central factor for deciding the interpretation of the noun. That is, it reflects the value of the primary qualia role while the basic category of the noun is unchanged. The following datum illustrates this point.

(16) I have met women who epitomize the “good mother”; they genuinely love and care for their children and give them a great deal of attention, playing with them and guiding them in a way that most of us feel we can never emulate.

(BNC: CCN 971)
There is only one primary qualia role in one qualia structure.

This constraint explains the (un)acceptability of the data in (18).

(18) a. i. She is a blonde and beautiful dancer.
   ii. *She is a blonde and fast dancer.

b. *a tall and regular contributor
c. *a handsome and frequent visitor
d. *a young and early riser

(Vendler 1967)

In (18ai) the adjectives blonde and beautiful each modify the formal qualia role of the noun dancer, so that the formal role is a unique primary qualia role of the noun, conforming to constraint (17). However, in (18aii), blonde modifies the formal role of dancer while fast modifies the telic role of the same noun, namely, the event of dancing. That is, this structure has two primary qualia roles, the formal and the telic role, hence is unacceptable. The same explanation applies to (18b–d) sentences. The first adjective modifies the formal qualia role of the noun while the second one modifies the telic role.

We shall now return to the prepositional possessive constructions and offer a proposal concerning the function of the of-poss and the to-poss, based on the theoretical preliminaries reviewed in Section 3 and 4.

5 A PROPOSAL

5.1 The Function of the Of-Poss

Let us reconsider the semantic representation of mother in (15c), repeated in (19) for convenience.

(19) [mother
   TYPESTR = [ARG1 = x:human]
   QUALIA = [FORMAL = x.kinship_rel(x,y)]
   [CONST = female(x)]
   [TELIC = bring_up(e,x,y)]
]

The value of the formal role is kinship_relation(x,y), which means that x corresponds to y's mother. Thus, this value includes a possessive relationship. Therefore, either of the possessive expressions dealt with here, the to-poss or the of-poss, may be concluded to have some relation to the formal role. Let us assume that it is the of-poss that has this relation.
(20) **The Function of the Of-Poss**

Of the arguments in the relationship that is a telic value of the head noun, the of-poss saturates the one that does not bind into the type structure.

In the case of *mother of the bride*, the of-poss of the *bride* saturates y in *kinship_relation(x, y)*, which is a formal value of *mother*, since x has already been bound by x in the type structure.

The assumption is that the of-poss saturates an empty argument in the formal value of the head noun. The question then arises as to why it is of-poss, instead of to-poss, that is related to the formal role. We shall see in the next section that there is evidence that the to-poss refers to another meaning component.

5.2 **The Function of the To-Poss**

Let us examine the data in (21).

(21) a. *? Mary was a good mother of the bride.
   b. Mary was a good mother to the bride.

In the case where the adjective *good* occurs, the of-poss is inappropriate as in (21a), while the to-poss is completely acceptable as in (21b).

We have argued above that the adjective *good* selects the telic role and the telic role becomes a primary qualia role. We have just seen that *good* co-occurs with the to-poss rather than of-poss. Moreover we have constraint (17) that states that there is only one primary qualia role in one qualia structure. These three factors lead to the conclusion that the to-poss is closely related to the telic role of the noun that it is modifying. Therefore, we will make the following hypothesis concerning the function of to-poss.

(22) **The Function of the To-Poss**

The to-poss saturates the second argument of the event as a value of the telic qualia role of the head noun.

To show what this hypothesis indicates, let us take a to-poss expression *mother to the bride* as an example. The prepositional phrase to the *bride* serves to saturate the second argument of the event in the telic qualia role of the head noun *mother*. *Mother* has the semantic representation (15c), which is repeated here again for convenience.
The second argument of the event \text{bring}_\text{up}(e, x, y), namely, \( y \) in (23), is saturated by to the bride.\(^4\) By this process, mother to the bride comes to highlight the content of the telic qualia role of mother, and obtains the interpretation “the mother who brought up the bride.”

Now we can give an explanation for the unacceptability of (21a), which is repeated in (24).

(24) *? Mary was a good mother of the bride.

We have seen in Section 4 that when the adjective good is used, the telic qualia role of the noun it is modifying is the primary qualia role. However, the of-poss causes the formal role to be the primary qualia role. Therefore, (24) has two primary qualia roles, that is, the telic and the formal role, which violates constraint (17).

5.3 Summary

Section 5 has offered the proposal that an of-poss and a to-poss have the function (20) and (22), respectively. If this analysis is correct, these possessives are not pure “possessives” in the strict sense of the term. They are characterised as merely prepositional phrases that have the function (20) and (22). However, we will continue to refer to them as before, for ease of explanation.

6 AN EXPLANATION

In this section we shall show that our analysis provided in the last section can answer to the questions posed in Section 2.

6.1 Difference in Meaning

The first question to be answered is what makes the difference in meaning between the of-poss and the to-poss in the examples (3) and (5). We will begin with (3).

6.1.1 Explanation to (3) We have seen in Section 2 that Konishi (1976) states

\(^4\) An event argument, \( e \), is not included in the counting of arguments in the rest of this article.
that the of-poss expression (3a) means that the door belongs to the room, while the meaning of the to-poss expression (3b) is similar to "the door leading to the room." Examples (3) are repeated in (25).

(25) a. the door of the room
    b. the door to the room

In order to give an explanation to this phenomenon, we have to investigate the lexical semantics of the word door. This noun has the semantic representation given below.

(26) 

There are two values in the type structure: x:phys_obj and y:aperture. This captures the fact that a door is a physical object and, at the same time, an aperture. In the qualia structure the formal role has a value hold(w, x). This relation states that a physical object w holds a door as a physical object. In the telic role, a door as an aperture has a function of leading to a space z which is a room or a house.

Assuming that the noun door has the semantic representation (26), we can explain (25). (25a) the door of the room is an of-poss expression. We proposed in (20) the function of an of-poss shown again here.

(27) Of the arguments in the relationship that is a telic value of the head noun, the of-poss saturates the one that does not bind into the type structure.

Following these characteristics of an of-poss, of the room in (25a) saturates the w-argument in the relation hold(w, x) of the formal role. The formal role then acquires the status of the primary qualia role. Therefore, the door of the room becomes an expression which directly reflects the value of the formal role, namely, hold(w, x). For this reason, (25a) means that the door belongs to the room.

Now we turn to the to-poss expression the door to the room in (25b). We have proposed the hypothesis (22) concerning the function of a to-poss, repeated here for convenience.

(28) The to-poss saturates the second argument of the event as a value of the telic qualia role of the head noun.

Following this hypothesis, to the room saturates the second argument of the value of the telic role, that is, z-argument in lead_to(e, y, z) in (28). The telic role
acquires the status of the primary qualia role, so that the interpretation of the door to the room directly reflects the content of this event. Hence, the meaning of (25b) is similar to "the door leading to the room," as Konishi (1976) observed.

6.1.2 Explanation to (5) We turn to the fact that Wood (1967) observed, (5), which is repeated in (29).

(29) a friend to is used when the reference is to one who shows a friendly attitude or acts in a friendly way by giving practical assistance, support or sympathy to whoever or whatever is specified.

Wood states that the noun friend is normally followed by of, as in friend of Adam, whereas the to-poss is used in the case where the reference is to the one who has the property indicated in the underlined part of the statement shown above. Before going to the main claim, let us investigate the meaning of the noun friend. The noun friend stands for a personal relation with someone. Therefore, the qualia structure of friend should include at least the concept of personal relation, that is, a friendship relation, as seen in (30).

(30) QUALIA = \[FORMAL = friendship_relation(x, y)\]

Hence, the of-poss expression a friend of Adam, for example, is an expression which designates a friendship relation with Adam because of Adam saturates the second argument y in friendship_relation(x, y), the formal qualia role becoming the primary qualia role.

In the case of the to-poss expression friend to Adam, however, to Adam should be applied to the telic role of friend, following our analysis. If this is the case, what could be the telic role of friend? Generally speaking, a friend is a person who helps you or is kind to you. Therefore, it is possible to say that the telic role of this noun includes concepts such as helping or being kind. The qualia structure of friend may have the form as indicated below.

(31) The qualia structure of friend
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{FORMAL} = & \text{friendship_relation}(x, y) \\
\text{TELIC} = & \text{help/be kind to}(e, x, y)
\end{align*}
\]

The to-poss saturates the second argument of the value of the telic role, namely y in help/be kind to(e, x, y), and it then obtains the status of the primary qualia role. Therefore, the meaning of this expression directly reflects the content of this event. For this reason, the to-poss expression a friend to Adam is used when the reference is to "one who shows a friendly attitude or acts in a friendly way by giving practical assistance, support or sympathy", as the underlined part in (29) indicates.

To sum up, our analysis of the to- and of-poss can accommodate the meaning contrast between the two constructions. As we have seen in Section 2, the observations made by Konishi and Wood are descriptively correct. However, they can be regarded as a sense enumerative analysis, to which a generative approach to
the lexicon, such as the present one, is preferable.5

6.2 Difference in Acceptability of the To-Poss

This section gives an answer to the second question that we posed in Section 2: what makes the to poss expressions in (10) unacceptable? The data are repeated here for convenience.

(32) a. i. corner {*to/ of} the table
    ii. redness {*to/ of} the skin
    iii. size {*to/ of} the apple
b. i. father {*to/of} his country
    ii. father {*to/of} the idea
c. president {to*/of} the college

In order to give an answer, we will investigate the semantics of the head nouns. The following citations are the definitions of these nouns in Collins Cobuild English Dictionary.

(33) a. corner: A corner is a point or an area where two or more edges, sides, or surfaces of something join.
b. size: The size of something is how big or small it is.
c. president: The president of the organization is the person who has the highest position in it.
c. father: The man who invented or started something is sometimes referred to as the father of that thing.

What these citations make clear is that the meaning of these nouns can be defined by its formal characteristics, a factor which is listed in the lexical semantics of a noun as a formal qualia role. That is, it is possible to say that these nouns do not contain a concept of purpose or function, which should be a telic qualia role. Therefore, these nouns do not have a meaning component to which a to poss is applied. It is possible for the of poss to occur, however, because these nouns have a formal role, and then the of poss applies.

6.3 Summary

We have observed in Section 6 that the present account of the to- and the of-poss can offer an answer to both questions asked in Section 2, concerning the difference in meaning between the two constructions and the impossibility for the to-poss to modify the nominals which lack the telic qualia role.

5 For the sense enumerative analysis, see Pustejovsky (1995).
In this section, we will show other consequences that follow from our proposal concerning the function of the to-poss and the of-poss. The following example poses us an interesting question.

(34) ... he was her brother, had been mother, father, friend to her ever since she, a tiny babe, had lost both her parents.

(ECME: E. Orezy, The Scarlet Pimpernel)

The person described as he in the beginning of example (34) is a brother of the person expressed as her, as he was her brother indicates. If a to-poss expresses a personal relationship in the same way as an of-poss, the underlined to-poss expression mother, father, friend to her have to be concluded as a contradiction. It must be impossible that a person has a parent-child relationship with someone while the former is actually the latter's brother. The question now arises: how can the man be described as mother, father, friend to her although he is actually her brother?

Our proposal for the function of the to-poss can easily give an explanation to this question. We have proposed that the to-poss is applied to the telic qualia role of the head nominal, and then in that case the telic role is selected as the primary qualia role. Based on this analysis, the interpretation of mother, father, friend to her, a to-poss expression, reflects the content of the telic role of the head nouns. Therefore, this to-poss expression indicates that her brother does what mother, father and friend normally do for her. Hence, the content of the formal role, which includes a concept of personal relation such as a kinship relation or a friendship relation, is irrelevant here. For this reason, it is possible to describe the man as mother, father, friend to her although he is actually her brother.

The same explanation can be applied to the use of the to-poss in (35a), and the description shown in (35b) made by Wood (1967) concerning this datum.

(35) a. They have been good neighbours to us.
   b. A neighbour to usually refers to a neighbourly attitude, rather than to the mere fact of living near.

(Wood 1967)

As the underlined part in (35b) indicates, neighbours to us does not refer to “the mere fact of living near.” This observation conforms to our proposal that a to-poss is applied to the telic qualia role of the head nominal and is not related to the formal role. Concepts such as “living near” are considered to be stored in the formal qualia role. Therefore, neighbours to us, a to-poss expression, does not have the interpretation which reflects the concept “living near.” Instead, the meaning directly reflects the value of the telic role of the noun neighbour, that is, to show a neighbourly attitude to someone.
In this article we made the following proposals concerning the possessive expressions with prepositions of and to.

(36) a. The Function of the Of-Poss
Of the arguments in the relationship that is a telic value of the head noun, the of-poss saturates the one that does not bind into the type structure.

b. The Function of the To-Poss
The to-poss saturates the second argument of the event as a value of the telic qualia role of the head noun.

By proposing the characterisation of the to-poss and the of-poss, we can solve the problems which were put forward in Section 2. The first question was what causes the difference in meaning between the to-poss and the of-poss in (3) and (5). The second question was what makes the to-poss expression in (10) unacceptable. We answered these questions with our proposals in (36). In section 8, we presented another consequence which is derived from our characterisation of the prepositional possessive constructions.

What is expressed as a to-poss and an of-poss has the status of a default argument in the argument structure. The default argument is an argument which is optionally mapped to the surface syntax. Pustejovsky (1995) states that “defaults arguments can be satisfied by full phrasal expression as a PP (p. 66).” However, he does not discuss the mechanism that determines the choice of preposition. Nor do other theories of the semantics-syntax interface give a satisfactory explanation to this matter. Therefore, this study gives a new direction to work on linking of optional elements to surface syntax.

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