Possession and Personhood
Effects of ontological differences on linguistic possessive constructions

B.C. Hörl

hoerl.bernhard@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This scientific work is an attempt to re-evaluate Western notions of POSSESSION by embedding the debate into an ontological framework which takes into account the existence of multiple ontological worlds. By analysing Western linguistic expressions of possession and contrasting them with possessive relationships from native Amazonian languages, presented data will not only promote the acknowledgement of foreign modes of thinking and challenge what is often seen as 'natural' or 'inherent', but also substantiate the concrete effect of ontological differences on linguistic possessive constructions. To this effect, this thesis will offer readers a foundational definition of CONCEPTUAL POSSESSION which should enable them to get a clearer view of possessive relationships and their interplay between people, animals and other nonhuman entities.

KEY WORDS: Possession; ontology; personhood; animism; naturalism.

For everyone embracing difference.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DECLARATION

I, Bernhard Hörl, declare that this thesis titled, 'Possession and Personhood: Effects of ontological differences on linguistic possessive constructions' and the work presented in it are my own.

I confirm that:

- This work was done wholly while in candidature for a degree at this University.

- Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed.

- Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work.

- I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

Signed:

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CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

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ABBREVIATIONS

→	acting (on)
∅	zero
1	first person
2	second person
2SG.L.	second person singular long form
3	third person
3COR	third person coreferential
CERT	certainty
COREF	coreferential
INST	instrumental
FACS	facsimile
LOC	locative
NOM	nominalizer
NCERT	non-certainty
PAS1	past tense
PAS3	past tense
PE	possessee
POSS	possessive
PR	possessor
PRES	present
TR	transitive

1. INTRODUCTION

The field of POSSESSION is a fundamental human domain which can tell us much about how people conceptualise their environment and relationships within it. Studying possessive constructions and their linguistic representations will thus provide important information about distinctions in how speakers of different languages organise their interpersonal relations and also interactions with nonhuman entities. Once this very foundational level of human interaction is explored across different communities and languages, one must be prepared to encounter not only intercultural, but also profound ontological differences between people, which can challenge established Western notions of humanness. In this thesis, I want to investigate how particular ontological foundations can alter the dynamics of possessive relationships. With this in mind, I will analyse linguistic possessive relationships from indigenous Amazonian languages whose roots are entrenched within an animist ontology, determine their effect on the general domain of POSSESSION and illustrate possible deviations from their translated counterparts in English. A central aim of this work is to substantiate the influence that different ontologies can have on people on both a conceptual and linguistic level and to prove that even allegedly universal classifications can be entrenched in very distinctive ontological foundations. In order to accurately explore ontological differences of various linguistic representations of POSSESSION across languages, I will first outline a contemporary Western definition of 'possession' and determine whether it is possible to apply it to an analysis that takes not only other languages but also different belief systems into account. For this purpose, I will test the universality of established English definitions of 'possession' to arrive at a cross-culturally applicable definition of the domain, which will serve as a suitable foundation for my subsequent analysis and prevent my findings from drifting off into ethnocentrism. Since the theory of ontological differences between people is still a heavily-debated subject in the field of anthropology, as a next step, I will not only promote the existence of foreign ontologies and introduce animism as an example of ontological otherness but also set out to explore a Western ontological foundation. By providing another perspective on inherently Western modes of thought I will attempt to unveil linguistic concepts that are disguised as 'natural' and question their claim of universality. Only after these ontological affiliations have been determined will it be possible to illustrate their concrete influence on the domain of POSSESSION, untie prevalent possessive classifications from their reference framework and present new possible ways of documenting and translating POSSESSION across languages.

2. DEFINING POSSESSION

> *"The linguistic phenomena labeled 'possessive' are there, ready for inspection and for classification –*
> *recognizable even for the layman. Nevertheless, possessivity is one of the phenomena least understood."*
> *(Seiler 1983: 1)*

POSSESSION[1] can be regarded as one of the most fundamental human domains. Next to the actual state of being or existing, the organisation of relations between different beings constitutes an integral part of the understanding of humanness and human identity. In *Being and Nothingness* Sartre regards "to have" as one of the three categories of human existence (the other two being "to do" and "to be"), saying that "the totality of my possessions reflects the totality of my being. I am what I have" (Sartre 1978: 591). Given the importance of the concept of POSSESSION it thus comes as a surprise that although the general domain has always drawn the interest of scholars, a clear semantic demarcation and definition of POSSESSION has yet to be achieved. The striking thing is that after decades and centuries of research on the topic, proposed theories do not only show what I would call 'a healthy amount of academic disagreement' on certain specifics but seem to diverge on very fundamental levels. McGregor illustrates the problem of concreteness in defining POSSESSION when noting that it is

> a relational concept that potentially covers a wide range of conceptual relations between entities, including, for human beings, between persons and their body-parts and products, between persons and their kin, between persons and their representations (e.g. names, photographs), between persons and their material belongings (animate and inanimate items they own), between persons and things that they have usership-rights to or control over, between persons and cultural and intellectual products, and so on. For other animates and inanimates a more restricted range of conceptual relations is generally available. (McGregor 2009:1)

The central problem of this debate, namely the lack of an exact theoretical definition of the domain of POSSESSION is well exemplified by considering Heine (1997), where the author proposes a distinction between 'possessive' and 'non-possessive' meanings of possessive constructions (*Liz has a car* vs. *Liz has a problem*). I believe that once scholars call for 'non-possessive meanings of possessive constructions' the semantic foundation of this linguistic field has to be questioned and revisited. Thus, as a first step into this direction, I want to start this thesis by analysing contemporary definitions of the English lexeme 'possession'.

Most people will agree that there are certain entities one can possess, and others that do not fall into this category. Looking at the English language, it can be said that someone can 'possess a house', 'possess a car', 'possess a dog' or more general that 'someone has a multitude of material possessions'. However, speakers of the language also generally agree on the fact that someone cannot 'possess their parents', 'possess a headache' or 'be in possession of arms and legs'. Due to such delimitations, it would only be understandable to presume the existence of a corpus of clearly defined rules of 'possessability'. However, this semantic foundation of POSSESSION and the division of entities into categories of what can or cannot be possessed is far from clear-cut. I want to illustrate this semantic discordance by looking at various contemporary definitions of 'possession' in established English dictionaries.

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[1] The bold print here signifies the use of the 'concept of possession', whereas the lexeme 'possession' itself is marked by single quotation marks.

Definition of POSSESSION	
The Latin root from possession is *possessio* from the verb *possidere*, which comes from Latin possess- 'occupied, held', from the verb *possidere*, from *potis* 'able, capable' + sedere 'sit' (Oxford Dictionary).	
Dictionary	**Definitions**

Oxford Dictionary	1. The state of having, owning, or controlling something
	    a. (Law) Visible power or control over something, as distinct from lawful ownership; holding or occupancy as distinct from ownership
	    b. (informal) The state of possessing an illegal drug
	    c. (In soccer, rugby, and other ball games) temporary control of the ball by a player or team:
	2. (usually **possessions**) Something that is owned or possessed
	    a. A territory or country controlled or governed by another
	3. The state of being controlled by a demon or spirit
	    a. The state of being completely dominated by an idea or emotion

Merriam-Webster	➔ The act of having or taking into control
	    a. control or occupancy of property without regard to ownership
	    b. ownership
	    c. control of the ball or puck; also : an instance of having such control (as in football)
	➔ Something owned, occupied, or controlled : property
	➔ Domination by something (as an evil spirit, a passion, or an idea)
	    a. a psychological state in which an individual's normal personality is replaced by another
	    b. self-possession

Collins Dictionary	1. The act of possessing or state of being possessed 2. Anything that is owned or possessed 3. (plural) Wealth or property 4. The state of being controlled or dominated by or as if by evil spirits 5. The physical control or occupancy of land, property, etc, whether or not accompanied by ownership 6. A territory subject to a foreign state or to a sovereign prince 7. (sport) Control of the ball, puck, etc, as exercised by a player or team

I believe that above definitions exhibit clear intersections and agreements from which it is possible to derive certain trends in the use of 'possession'. First, it is noticeable that the concept of CONTROL must play an integral role in the contemporary conceptualisation of 'possession' in English. Whether it is in the field of law (e.g. land, valuables) or sports (e.g. ball), it appears that if someone 'has possession over something', this person can exert control over it. This form of control suggests a certain level of exclusivity, in the sense that no one except the possessor can possess the same entity at the same time (of course, unless unlawfully removed) and that the person in charge has free choice over what happens with the possessed item. Secondly, each of the dictionary entries in one way or another connects POSSESSION to the concept of OWNERSHIP, by defining 'possession' as 'the act of having ownership or owning'. Conversely, the Oxford Dictionary defines 'ownership' as "the act, state, or right of possessing something" (Oxford Dictionary). This strong connection between 'possession' and 'ownership' poses a special interest for me since it is a definition that is not just commonly found in the English vernacular but also appears in academic publications of scholars of linguistics. What is important to note is that in some publications, the use of 'ownership' and 'possession' does not only suggest a prominent semantic overlap but even an equation of the two concepts. For example, in Stassen (2009), a fairly recent work on predicative possession, we read:

When asked, laymen as well as linguists will readily agree that a sentence like '(11) John has a motorcycle' constitutes a case of an encoding of 'real' possession, whereas sentences that look formally identical, such as '(12) Frank has a sister', (13) A spider has six legs, (14) Mandy has a basket on her lap, (15) Bill has the flu, are not seen as cases of possession in a 'core', or 'prototypical' sense. In fact, English is a language in which there is a diagnostic test for separating prototypical possession from other cases. As can be seen, substituting the verb *own* for the verb *have* in the above sentences is readily possible for sentence (11), whereas this substitution will lead to non-felicitous results in sentences (12)–(15) (Stassen 2009: 11).

Apart from the idea of distinguishing between types of 'real', 'core' and 'non-prototypical' possession (which can be connected to Heine's proposal of 'possessive' and 'non-possessive' conceptualisations of POSSESSION), the author here proposes the verb 'own' as a point of reference in order to elicit prototypical forms of 'possession'. Even though I disagree with several aspects of above statement - which I regard as an imposition rather than an acknowledgement - what I want to point out here is Stassen's proposed equation of POSSESSION and OWNERSHIP and that the label "real possession" is misleading because it promotes the view that there is a common consensus on the definition of POSSESSION.

Lastly, another interesting aspect about all three proposed dictionary definitions of 'possession' is the explicitly mentioned meaning of its passive form. While the active form of the possessive construction generally refers to an act of control over a material entity, the passive meaning 'being possessed' appears to refer to a person that is controlled by an immaterial entity, such as an evil spirit, idea or emotion.

From this brief analysis of the English lexeme 'possession' I want to conclude that according to contemporary lexical definitions:

- 'Possession' describes an asymmetric relationship where control or dominance is exerted over an entity
- 'Possession' is commonly equated to 'ownership'
- the active form of 'possession' mostly refers to an act of control over material entities
- the passive use of 'possession' is commonly connected the act of being possessed by an abstract or immaterial entity

This definition of 'possession' raises a number of problematic issues. If 'possession' is in fact semantically congruent with 'ownership', why is it possible to possess something without owning it? A house, for example, can be 'in someone's possession', even if that person is not the house's owner. Or take 'have', the prototypical verb for expressing predicative possession in English (as addressed in chapter 2.4). If utterances such as 'I have a nose', 'I have parents' or 'I have ambition' are considered 'possessive constructions', why do they not equally count as 'ownership constructions'? If 'possession' really expresses asymmetric relationships, these entities should not be excluded from the monodirectional exertion of control that 'ownership' denotes. My point here is that it should be clear that today's common practise of grouping the concepts of POSSESSION and OWNERSHIP comes with an abundance of theoretical mismatch. At this point, it is possible to either hold on to the current definition of 'possession', which would lead to the aforementioned categorisation of a core cluster of 'prototypical' or 'real' possession and another group of exceptions, or to re-evaluate the notion of POSSESSION on a foundational level. As already hinted in the title of this paper, I will aim to do the latter. In order to approach this task systematically, I first want to disconnect the notion of POSSESSION from the realm of linguistics in order reduce it to its philosophical atomic particles, its lowest common denominator, so to speak.

2.1 Fundamentals of Possession

Since one main aim of this paper is to analyse the effect of Amazonian indigenous ontologies on POSSESSION, it is crucial to define POSSESSION in a way that will permit me to contrast and compare my Amazonian findings to Western conceptualisations of possessive relationships and avoid judging native Amerindian concept along inherently Western parameters. I will thus follow an onomasiological approach, which requires me to first define a precise domain before being able to look at concrete examples from different languages. Once the field of POSSESSION is regarded as a fundamental human domain it must be theoretically possible to establish a universal conceptual definition that will hold true cross-culturally and cross-linguistically. In order to arrive at this universally applicable notion of POSSESSION, I first need to address a distinction that seems to be the cause for much confusion and misinterpretation among speakers of English, namely the difference between 'linguistic POSSESSION' and 'conceptual POSSESSION'. Just as in the traditional Saussurean (1983) model of the sign, I propose to draw a clear line between the concept of possession (signified) and the linguistic realisation of this concept (signifier). Applying this classic model to my area of interest, it must be possible to expect 'notional POSSESSION' to be represented by 'linguistic (formal) POSSESSION'. However, in the following section I will set out to show that the current linguistic signs addressing POSSESSION in the English language do not accurately link to CONCEPTUAL POSSESSION. To substantiate this assertion, I will now outline a model of what I regard as the conceptual foundation of the domain.

At this very basic level of CONCEPTUAL POSSESSION I expect to find two basic 'substances', namely one entity that possesses, a **possessor (PR)**, and another that is possessed, a **possessee (PE)** (Seiler 1983). These two substances enter into a specific connection with each other, a relationship which has been given many names, such as 'intrinsic connection' (Chomsky 1972; Hawkins 1981), 'conceptual relation' (Seiler 1983), 'sphere of influence' (Langacker (1987) or 'schema of interest or involvement' (Brugman 1988). Although all of these definitions run along similar parameters, I find it most fitting to depict this connection according to Seiler (1983), who portrays a '**conceptual relation**' as the relational force between a PR and PE. What I find most appealing about this definition is that its non-normative character does not presuppose any specificity in the nature of the relationship.

With the three core components determined, this simple foundational model of CONCEPTUAL POSSESSION can thus be graphically illustrated as such:
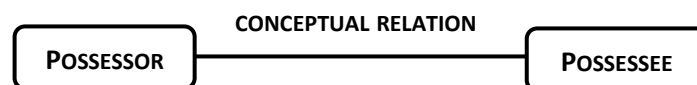
Figure 1: Model conceptual possession

For the purpose of putting this model into context, I want to go back and revisit the examples featured in the earlier quote from Stassen (2009), in which the author proposes a semantic differentiation between (1) and (2)-(5).

(1)   John has a motorcycle
(2)   Frank has a sister
(3)   A spider has six legs
(4)   Mandy has a basket on her lap
(5)   Bill has the flu

Instead of trying to divide between 'real' or 'prototypical' forms of POSSESSION in these linguistic possessive constructions, I believe that CONCEPTUAL POSSESSION must rather fulfil

the criterion of constituting the underlying fundamental element that is shared by all of them and thus connects them with each other. The proposed theory of a 'conceptual relation' as the nature of the connection between a PR and a PE certainly serves this purpose and manages to act as the combining force between John and his motorcycle, Frank and his sister, the spider and its legs, Mandy and her basket, as well as Bill and his sickness. The important thing that needs to be understood is that these admittedly very different types of possessive relationships still all share the same notional basis, which is illustrated in above model. Furthermore, this common ground of possessive constructions is not only restricted to a particular language. Since I regard the conceptual level of POSSESSION as a general human domain, I expect this model to be applicable across languages. Rather than utilising one language's classificatory systems, CONCEPTUAL POSSESSION constitutes an appropriate reference point from which it will be possible to compare possessive constructions of different languages and language families.

Having established a basic model of CONCEPTUAL POSSESSION, I now want to return to the aforementioned assertion, stating that the current usage of the English lexeme 'possession' does not fully link to CONCEPTUAL POSSESSION. I believe that the main points of conflict between my proposed conceptual model and common contemporary definitions in English lie in the latter's presupposed assumption of control and dominance in 'possession', which results in its equation with 'ownership'. Since OWNERSHIP is a concept that strongly defines itself through a component of control, I come to the conclusion that current linguistic POSSESSION in English presents stronger a reference to CONCEPTUAL OWNERSHIP than to CONCEPTUAL POSSESSION. This would provide an explanation as to why the English lexeme 'possession' is so frequently equated with 'ownership' and where the additional attributes of control and domination in dictionary definitions of 'possession' stem from. If single linguistic constructions are seen on a semantic map as 'exemplars' that activate one another, it would not be hard to imagine a situation where the pervasiveness of the notion of OWNERSHIP (due to the strong presence of capitalism and materialism in Western countries) in the English language has made the concept share some of its semantic properties with the main cluster it inhabits, which is POSSESSION (Bybee 2006; Croft 2005). As a consequence, I believe that the linguistic equation of 'ownership' and 'possession' in English speaking societies can have very interesting implications on speaker's mental representations of the domain of POSSESSION, which I will further elaborate on in chapter 2.4. For now, the last thing I want to note is that I regard OWNERSHIP as nothing more but a specific type of possessive relationship which involves distinct elements of control and domination. For this reason, its specific semantic make-up ties the lexeme 'ownership' to the English language and English-speaking cultures and the concept can thus not be assumed to be cross-culturally applicable.

2.2   POSSESSIVE CLASSIFICATIONS

Now that I have established my conceptual model for POSSESSION which serves as the reference point for linguistic POSSESSION, I want to look at possible classifications and categorisations of linguistic possessive constructions. Although expressions such as 'I have a headache', 'I have two sisters' and 'I have a car' share the same notional basis of a PR, a PE and their conceptual relation, we are presented with the need to further structure and subdivide the nature of the conceptual relationship since "[a]n undifferentiated concept of 'possession' does not help us to account for these differences" (Seiler 1983: 2). Trying to create such divisions, scholars have presented multiple classifications to characterise the nature of the possessive relationship, each generally focusing on one specific component of the above graphically illustrated model of CONCEPTUAL POSSESSION. In other words, three main questions are addressed: WHO possesses WHAT and HOW?

In order to answer the WHO question of POSSESSION, possessive constructions can be grouped along certain qualities of the PR. Central to this is a basic classification that

distinguishes possessive relationships along the parameter of humanity, namely POSSESSION involving a human or nonhuman PR (Heine 1997: 9). Addressing the WHAT question, the focus shifts to the entity that constitutes the PE. Here, Heine suggests that it would be possible to differentiate between several types of POSSESSION, such as 'concrete' *(I have two cats)*, 'abstract' *(I have no time)* or 'social' (*I have two sisters*). While the distinction between human and nonhuman PR's can be regarded as relatively unproblematic, these proposed classifications for the PE can be challenged due to the fact that they presuppose shared interpretations of above concepts. Although a large number of people in the Western world would most likely agree in their basic distinction between humans and nonhuman entities, groupings along parameters such as 'abstract', 'concrete' or 'social' might yield quite different results among speakers of a language, let alone people from different languages and cultures. At this point I will not propose any alternative categorisations of POSSESSION along characteristics of the PR or PE, neither do I want to suggest that the scholars behind these approaches claim universal applicability of these categories. However, I want to remark that due to the cultural and linguistic entrenchment of above terms, such classifications cannot be utilised in the cross-cultural and cross-linguistic analysis included in this work.

Turning to the HOW question, the centre of attention shifts to the nature of the conceptual relation between a PR and a PE. Here, the most common and widely used classification of possessive relationships is found, namely the distinction between 'alienable possession' and 'inalienable possession'. The basic idea behind groupings of this sort is to look at whether or not a possessed entity can be alienated (i.e. removed, taken away) from a Pr. What is poses a problem when classifying possessive relationships as 'alienable' or 'inalienable' (and this is not a novel idea but a concern that has been previously stated by numerous researchers) is that it presupposes a common definition of what can or cannot be taken away from a PR. However, across languages and cultures we can expect to find considerable interpretative differences in the understanding of notions of 'alienability' and 'inalienability' (more in chapter 5.1.3). For these reasons, I believe that these two categories are not suitable as classifiers of possessive relationships across different cultures. Nevertheless, I do think that the underlying idea of 'alienability distinctions' has merit, simply due to the fact that there are distinct entities in this world that undeniably cannot exist without their reference. For example, where there is an arm, there must necessarily be an entity the arm is attached to; similarly, a person cannot be a parent without having a child (Matthews 2007). Thus, I view such relations between body parts and kinship as sharing the same mereological foundation, or what Seiler refers to as "bio cultural", "the relationship between parts and whole of an organism" (Seiler 1983: 4). If the inclusion of entities into the realm of inalienability were strictly reduced to such part-whole entities which are logically predetermined, I would see no reason why the domain could not be able to function as a possible source of cross-linguistic and cross-cultural insight. Nevertheless, since a common agreement on the issue of alienability has not yet been established, I choose not to base my linguistic analysis of possessive constructions on this category since it could lead to misinterpretations of its results. To avoid such confusion and arrive at an alternative depiction of the nature of the relationship between a PR and a PE which can be utilised to compare possessive relationships from different languages and cultures, I again follow Seiler who proposes to classify POSSESSION according to levels of **intimacy**. In his model mereological relationships in which "the possessive relationship is inherently given in one of the two terms involved" are defined as '**inherent'**, whereas less intimate relations are regarded as '**established'** (Seiler 1983). Although Seiler's model uses different terminology, it basically corresponds to the above outlined idea of 'alienability distinctions, reduced to part-whole relations', the only difference being that the term 'inherent' addresses the nature of the relationship whereas 'inalienability' refers to a consequence of the former. Through removing the 'academically ballasted' terms 'alienable' and 'inalienable' from the equation, Seiler creates a binary theoretical construct whose converse 'functional principles' create a clear distinction

between entities that stand in a part-whole relationship to each other and others that exist externally from a PR and whose connection thus has to be established.

Both inherent and established relationships in linguistic possessive constructions are expressed grammatically in two ways in the English language, namely through morphological attributes and verbs of predication. In the following section I want to briefly examine both grammatical constructions in closer detail and determine their form and function in regard to this debate about POSSESSION.

2.3   ATTRIBUTIVE VS. PREDICATIVE POSSESSION

Turning to the grammatical representation of POSSESSION, the English language provides us with the two categories of 'attributive possession' and 'predicative possession'. This is a distinction that can be found in many languages, where 'predicative possession' uses a verb to portray the possessive relationship between a PR and PE, whereas 'attributive possession' does not establish the nature of the relationship explicitly (Baron et al. 2001).

My main focus of interest in this respect is whether the nature of these two categories can provide us with direct insights into the specific possessive conceptual relations (*inherent* or *established*) included in the grammatical constructions. Seiler here argues in a laudably logical way, stating that once a relationship between two entities is not inherently given, it has to be predicated by external means of "a 'third', a special relator" between two entities (Seiler 1983: 8). He goes on by arguing that "syntactically speaking, POSSESSION is a relation between nominal and nominal, which is not mediated by a verb" and that predication, especially a verb of possession, only contributes to the expression to the extent that it refers to the particular mode of the possessive relationship (Seiler 1983: 4). This means that once the nature of a possessive relationship is not inherently clear but has to be established (or 'predicated (in the archaic sense of to assert or preach)') through explicit means, it cannot be inherent or intimate. According to this view, it would only be logical to conclude that attributive possession prototypically expresses inherent forms of POSSESSION, whereas predicative possession is used to indicate established possessive relations. This is in no way to say that inherent possession cannot be expressed by predicative possession or attributive possession cannot include established possessive relationships, I simply do not think that these combinations are logical on a conceptual level. I want to illustrate this idea in a rather simple example.

In the setting of an inherent relationship such as in (6) the conceptual relation between a PR and a PE is absolutely clear and no additional explanation for the mereological relationship between a daughter and a mother is needed. In (7), however, language users can struggle to identify the right interpretation of the possessive relationship in the attributive possessive construction due to the fact that the possessed entity is not inherently possessed but 'establishment-dependent'. As a result, various interpretations of the relationship between Anna and her painting are possible (*a painting that Anna produced, owns, wants to purchase,* etc.) since the connection between the two is not of an inherent nature.

(6) Anna's mother
(7) Anna's painting
(8) Anna has a mother
(9) Anna owns a painting

Conversely, the predication of an inherently established connection between two lexical items such as in (8) feels alienating and superfluous because the PE contains a clear reference to the PR (Seiler 1983). Naturally it is possible to argue for a conversational context in which the predication of the relationship between a PR and an inherently possessed item will make perfect sense (just take a contrastive statement such as: *Tom's mother has died but Anna still has a*

mother); however, apart from such exceptional cases – in which first, the part-whole nature of an inherently possessed item needs to be challenged in order to justify a predication of the inherent relationship in a later instance - the construction's pragmatic value is so minimal that it would be very unlikely to find such formations in standard language use. Whereas predication is thus unusual in conversational contexts including inherent possession, a transitive verb such as *own* provides necessary information regarding the nature of the possessive relationship in (9) and eliminates the problems of polysemy found in (7).

To conclude the above presented ideas regarding a direct link between the grammatical categories attributive and predicative possession and the nature of their included possessive relationships, I expect that in English, items that are generally expressed through means of predicative possession are presumably of an established nature whereas inherently possessed entities will be found in attributive possessive constructions. Furthermore, although the categories of attributive and predicative possessive constructions will not exhibit full semantic congruence across languages, I believe that the general conceptual idea of 'assumption of inherent relationships vs. predication of established relationships' can be relevant in any language. If this universal salience holds true, then the awareness of possessive relationship types and their connection to particular grammatical categories such as attributive and predicative possession in English can be of assistance when analysing cross-linguistic possessive relationships.

2.4 THE SEMANTIC DOMAIN OF 'HAVE'

When analysing possessive construction in the English language, one will inevitably be faced with the task of defining the semantic foundation of the transitive verb HAVE. The main reason for the inclusion of this chapter in my thesis is because HAVE constitutes the epicentre of the contemporary language of POSSESSION in English and as the main language of ethnography English is used in translations of foreign possessive constructions. For this reason it is vital to be aware of the semantics of the verb HAVE in order to accurately analyse translations of foreign linguistic concepts.

First, what needs to be understood is that the use of HAVE is not only pervasive in the language of POSSESSION. Due to its expansion over a variety of semantic fields, the lexeme generally enjoys a very prominent status in the English language. Its wide usage becomes apparent when considering the following sentences:

(10) I have money
(11) I have a father
(12) I have to go to school
(13) I had him fix my car
(14) I will not have such behaviour
(15) I have been singing all day

These few examples illustrate that HAVE cannot only be used to express both established (10) and inherent possession (11), but in (12) HAVE is used to indicate an obligation, in (13) HAVE can be seen equivalent to the verb MAKE, in (14) it is concerned with the notion of acceptance and in (15) it serves as an aspect marker. The external meanings of HAVE -sentences thus reach from *causative, depictive, affecting event, resultant state/event* to *existential-attributive.* Brugman further points out the central importance of HAVE in the English language by noting that the versatility of this predicate, its complementation possibilities and the number of valence descriptions associated with it even exceed the ones of the English verb BE (Brugman 1988: 22).

Although it there is no doubt that the lexeme 'have' can express multiple meanings in combination with other lexical items in a sentence, its transitive nature raises the question of the verb's independent meaning; in other words: what does HAVE itself really mean? One theory for

the development of HAVE is offered by Givón, who convincingly hypothesises that the English lexeme HAVE is the derivation of semantically bleached transitive verbs such as 'take', 'grab', 'seize', 'hold' or 'obtain', where "the implicit end result of taking possession - *having* possession – becomes the core meaning of the verb" and as a result, "[i]f one *has taken* possession, one *has* possession" (Givón 2001: 134). This theory can also be connected to Heine's 'Action Schema' 'X takes Y', which states that "the notion predicative possession is conceptually derived from a propositional structure involving an agent, a patient, and some action or activity" (Heine 1997: 47; Heine 2001: 316).

The idea of portraying HAVE as a lexical remnant of semantically bleached 'action verbs' is very interesting and would provide an explanation for the common equation of POSSESSION and OWNERSHIP in English. As stated in the previous chapter, the nature of the relationship in inherent forms of POSSESSION is clear and thus does not need to be established. Once an entity is not inherently possessed and a possessive relation not presumed, a PR must actively exert control to establish this connection by 'taking', 'grabbing', 'seizing', 'holding' or 'obtaining' it. The implication of this would be that essentially every expression of predicative possession in English includes an underlying element of control or domination. This would, in turn, explain why the notion of predicated forms of POSSESSION, which are mostly expressed through the transitive verb HAVE and whose status within the language is so pervasive it has been named 'real' POSSESSION by some (Stassen 2009: 11), has apparently transformed into the prototypical contemporary meaning of POSSESSION. Once the element of control was presumed in possessive relationships, the foundational idea of a non-normative conceptual relation as the relational force between two entities shifted to the background and thus was replaced by the concept of OWNERSHIP, which in principal is nothing else but a model of POSSESSION whose conceptual relation is built on an element of control and dominance. As stated above, this hypothesis is fully based on the assumption that the transitive verb HAVE is derived from semantically bleached propositional structures involving words of action. However, at the current time I am not aware of viable alternative theories and I see no reason to doubt this one.

Having outlined my definition of both conceptual and linguistic POSSESSION, I now want to further follow my onomasiological approach and as a next step outline the foundation of the domain of ontology. Only once both these domains have been clearly established will I be able to base my analysis of the effects of ontological influences on POSSESSION on the strong foundation this debate calls for.

3. UNDERSTANDING ONTOLOGY

"Once a relational ontology has been introduced, then by its very nature it challenges any attempt to erect barriers between something that can be called the real, material, or physical world and something else that can be called thought, discourse, or narrative" (Alberti et al. 2011: 905)

In philosophy, ONTOLOGY is often referred to as 'the study of the nature of being, becoming, existence or reality' and questions such as 'what exists?' or 'what does it mean to *be*?' are among the oldest ones of philosophical thinkers. In the field of anthropology, the study of ONTOLOGY is undoubtedly strongly connected to the conception of alterity (Holbraad in Carrithers 2008). Around the world, different people experience different things and are affected and shaped by a very distinct set of relational input. Persons whose relational make-up intersects in many points can be expected to conceptualise their lives along somewhat similar parameters and in turn, interpersonal relations which do not exhibit a large number of intersections will thus rather define themselves through difference than similarity. It is the interplay of these two concepts, similarity and dissimilarity, which anthropologists set out to study, understand and explain. However, due to the fact that the interest of most anthropological scholars (understandably) lies outside their realm of the familiar and known, much of the ethnographic and theoretical work is solely focussed on the study of difference and challenging established notions of difference (Alberti et al. 2011). The study of anthropological ontology sets out to account for the nature this otherness. In this task, ontologists are commonly challenged by scholars who believe culture to be the distinguishing factor of alterity between people. Over the last few decades, the trend of judging ethnographic findings along cultural parameters has led to a rapid spread of the term CULTURE across disciplines and made it a common instrument for portraying difference. However, since the turn of the 21st century, the emergence of a growing body of literature dealing with the effects of ontology in anthropology has sparked a heated debate between 'culturists' and 'ontologists' in the field. I believe that in order to understand anthropological ontology, it will be helpful to briefly outline the main points of this debate, which aims at demarcating the conceptual foundations of both CULTURE and ONTOLOGY.

3.1 THE ONTOLOGICAL TURN - ONTOLOGY VS. CULTURE

As mentioned above, the central point of this debate is whether interpersonal otherness should be accounted for in terms of ONTOLOGY or CULTURE. Many culture-proponents criticise the so-called 'ontological turn' (Paleček and Risjord 2013) in the field of anthropology and some would even go so far as to promote the provocative view that ontology is nothing but another word for culture[2] (Carrithers et al. 2010). Personally, I hold this claim to be fundamentally wrong and believe that it is therefore essential to create a clear differentiation between the two concepts, which I will now address.

In Western societies the notion of CULTURE is generally understood as posing the counterpart to NATURE, a juxtaposition in which NATURE can be seen as representing the 'inherent', whereas CULTURE marks the 'established'. From a cultural perspective, all people exist in the same world (or reality) and difference stems from social groups which utilise mutually shared characteristics and knowledge to distinguish themselves from others. Examples for such cultural idiosyncrasies can basically be found in anything that has been established by humans and diverges from a 'status primordialis' (the aboriginal state), be it a group's organisation of living arrangements, hierarchical orders, people's particular child rearing practises or simply eating habits. The anthropologists can then observe and document behaviour that is foreign to their own and thus reinforce the notion of people's affiliations to a

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[2] As can be seen in the prominent 2008 motion "Ontology Is Just Another Word for Culture" tabled at the 2008 meeting of the group for debates in anthropological theory at the University of Manchester.

particular culture. As a result, relatively novel academic disciplines such as Intercultural Communication aim at building bridges between 'culture A' and 'culture B' to enable successful means of communication between them.

The concept of ONTOLOGY differs from such cultural distinctions between people significantly. Whereas culture is concerned with people's "differing perspectives on an objective and universal reality" (Horton 2013: 1), a theory of ONTOLOGY suggests the existence of multiple realities in which people participate. This theory of relational ontologies was to a large extent promoted by Viveiros de Castro, whose perspectival anthropology in Native Amazonia contributed much to raising the issue of the existence of multiple realities (I will go into more detail of Amerindian multinaturalism as proposed by Viveiros de Castro in chapter 3.4) (Viveiros de Castro 1998). As a consequence of this theory of multinaturalism, different ontologies will provide different answers to the existential philosophical questions I mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, such as 'what exists and how?'. To put this idea in a less abstract example, I propose to imagine two people, one of whom believes in the presence of spirits which coexist among material entities in the world, whereas the other is a strict materialist who thinks that only that which they can see is real. Anthropologists are then faced with two options as to portray the two diverging concepts. The first option is to place both on one plane of reality, which will turn them into oppositional arguments. As a logical consequence of this, if one party believes their notion to be 'true', it will inevitably render the other's conception as 'false'. This model represents the cultural view, where culture constitutes the nature of difference in two conflicting views. The second option in this scenario is to place both the spiritual and materialistic conceptualisation on separate plains of reality, where both notions can each exist independently from each other. In this ontological model, the nature of difference is not found in the conflict between each idea, but in the foundational reality they inhabit, which mean that while both parties live in the same 'material world', they can have divergent views of this world, meaning that they perceive this world in very different ways. I hope this exemplification illustrates the profound fundamental difference between ONTOLOGY and CULTURE, namely that the distinction between cultural groups is that they "think differently about things", whereas people from different ontologies have "different things to think about (Fowles in Alberti et al. 2011).

One major point of criticism of this ontological conceptualisation of alterity has been that the placement of people in different realities would "radicalize unfamiliarity [...] by undermining the possibility of using Western ontological categories to shed light on non-Western settings" (Fowles in Alberti 2011), which would ultimately "dichotomize the gap between Westerners and non-Westerners" (Harris and Robb 2012: 668). In order words, this view is built on the idea that rather than trying to understand each other, an ontological view promotes the intensification of alterity between the people of the world. However, in my opinion it is crucial to understand that following an ontological approach in no way means that making sense of one reality from the standpoint of another is impossible and ontological alterity cannot be overcome. On the contrary, I think this conceptualisation of ontology can assist people in bridging differences and acknowledging similarities. Once ontology is granted the essential role in the determination of otherness that it deserves, scholars will be forced to stop trying to fit foreign concepts into pre-fabricated Western[3] moulds, start gaining 'true' (non-ethnocentric) insights and add them to their own "conceptual repertoire" (Holbraad in Carrithers 2010). It is therefore possible to counter any accusation of ontological anthropology as being 'primitivistic', 'alterist' or 'essentialist' by saying that only through acknowledging foundational ontological differences

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[3] For lack of a better word, I use 'Western' as an umbrella term in order to refer to nations and their schools of thought which are established in a Euro-American tradition. Although the geographic relevance of the term is no longer given, I will use it to establish an epicentre of accepted values and traditions, as opposed to 'foreign' parts of the world that have not yet been homogenised by globalisation and thus possibly exhibit world views which are largely unfamiliar to the former.

between people and placing them on individual spheres of reality, will it be possible to put an end to the exoticisation of non-Western groups and the portrayal of 'foreign' concepts along Western cultural parameters. The important thing to keep in mind is that a theory of ontology not only focusses on the reality of particular groups and stops at a researcher's own, but is all-encompassing; thus "accepting difference on its own terms […] can also lead to recognizing a degree of genuine similarity" (Horton 2013: 7).

For this reason, the 'ontological turn', the move from a cultural to an ontological viewpoint, has tremendous effects on the field of anthropology, which are inimitably outlined in Martin Holbraad's closing argument on the motion of why ONTOLOGY is not simply another word for CULTURE.

> So what makes the ontological approach to alterity not only pretty different from the culturalist one, but also rather better, is that it gets us out of the absurd position of thinking that what makes ethnographic subjects most interesting is that they get stuff wrong. Rather, on this account, the fact that the people we study may say or do things that to us appear as wrong just indicates that we have reached the limits of our own conceptual repertoire. […] we have grounds to suspect that there is something wrong with our ability to describe what others are saying, rather than with what they are actually saying, about which we *a fortiori* know nothing other than our own misunderstanding. The anthropological task, then, is not to account for why ethnographic data are as they are, but rather to understand what they are – instead of explanation or interpretation, what is called for is conceptualization. And note that such a task effectively inverts the very project of anthropological analysis. Rather than using our own analytical concepts to make sense of a given ethnography (explanation, interpretation), we use the ethnography to rethink our analytical concepts (Holbraad in Carrithers et al. 2010: 184).

What needs to be understood is that where there is an 'us' there is a 'them', and where there is a 'right' there must inevitably be a 'wrong'. This unproductive comparison between groups of people, which I consider to be one of the cardinal flaws of Western anthropology, is delegitimised once the common Western foundation of 'culture' is removed and replaced by an acknowledgement of different ontological backgrounds of people. A genuinely ontological approach must not privilege epistemology, its aim must be "to take seriously what we 'cannot' take seriously" and conversely "not to take seriously what we 'simply' cannot not take seriously" (Viveiros de Castro 2011: 133), otherwise investigations will result in "the study of other people's representations of what we *know* to be the real world" (Carrithers et al. 2010: 153), rather than acknowledging the existence of multiple worlds. In this regard, people's conceptualisation of 'their worlds', such as the existence of shamans or spirits cannot then be portrayed as 'their beliefs or visions' but must be seen as representing their objective depictions of reality since "concepts are real and reality is conceptual" (Henare, Holbraad and Wastell 2006: 9). It is vital to arrive at what Viveiros de Castro called "a theory of peoples' ontological autodetermination", which must eventually lead to a "permanent decolonization of thought" within anthropology (Viveiros de Castro 2011: 128). In the words of social anthropologist Stephen Hugh-Jones, what is needed is

> "fine-grained ethnography, one that returns us to the messy, lived worlds and not always tidy and consistent views of real peoples. This return to the ground not only mediates between structuralism and phenomenology but also reminds us of the limitations of Western categories applied to non-Western contexts – like ships that carry invasive alien species to our shores, these categories sometimes carry unwanted freight" (Hugh-Jones in Brightman et al. 2012: xiii).

Once otherness is acknowledged and embraced rather than assimilated in order to fit into a Western world view, it will be possible to gain novel elementary insights into humanness, which

can trigger a re-evaluation of existing Western understandings. The aim of scholars must be to neither depict foreign ontologies in connection to their own, nor ascribing themselves to them, which means "neither relinquishing them as the fantasies of others, nor fantasizing about them as leading to the true reality" (Viveiros de Castro 2011: 137), or what Holbraand in above quote refers to as 'conceptualisation, rather than explanation and interpretation'. Once ontologies are conceptualised rather than explained or interpreted, it will be possible for scholars to depart from Western ethnocentrism and allow themselves to learn from other ontologies, to re-evaluate and ultimately transform anthropological methodology and analytical approaches.

At this point I want to state that I am fully aware of the enormity of this claim, which calls for a large-scale paradigm shift within the field of anthropological linguistic documentation. However, I strongly believe that once someone accepts the existence of different ontological realities between people, there really is no conclusion that can be drawn other than that the way scientific research is currently being conducted in the field of anthropology has to be re-evaluated. Also, I do acknowledge the fact that unbiased, objective documentation of raw ethnographic data, disconnected from one's cultural and ontological reference framework, will be a highly complex, yet not impossible task. What is important is that the choice between 'culture-referential' and 'ontology-incorporating' documentation does not have to be an issue of 'either/or', but that each step taken towards the latter will bring scholars closer to truly 'depicting' (as opposed to 'analysing') foreign modes of thinking and living. Roughly speaking, this proposed paradigm shift entails two main actions.

Firstly, it calls for new ways of data collection and presentation, where scholars must not see fieldwork as means of determining whether certain concepts 'also exist' in other societies and if yes, 'in what way?' Just as researchers can set out on a project for the sheer purpose of finding ways to support a pre-existing hypothesis, I consider the goal of confirming the existence of inherently Western concepts outside Western societies a rather fruitless task that will do nothing but export Western modes of thinking across the world. Therefore, what is needed in 'ontologically-sensitive' fieldwork are new classificatory frameworks that allow for means of conceptualising, rather than analysing data. As an anthropological linguist, I can only offer such an example from the field of linguistics, namely Radical Construction Grammar (Croft 2001). This revolutionary theory promotes the view that inherently Western grammatical categories (e.g. subjects, objects, nouns, verbs, etc.) cannot be applied to foreign language systems and that linguistic constructions need to be granted autonomy, rather than equated with others. This means, for example, that the classification 'noun' only exists in English-speaking societies and can therefore not be semantically congruent with any grammatical category from outside its grammatical reference framework. That said, seemingly identical categories from closely related languages, such as *Nomen* in German or *naamwoord* in Dutch will thus exhibit slight variations that do not allow for an equation of any sort. As a result, even if a foreign lexical item appears identical to an English noun, a scholar must portray it within its original environment and grant it autonomy. Although I cannot go into more detail about Radical Construction Grammar due to the spatial limitations of this work, I want to point out that this theory offers a successful example of conceptualising foreign language data, which means that underlying ontological notions will not be forced into ill-fitting categories but rather will be presented in their native environment.

The second action this proposed paradigm shift calls for is the reworking of 'pre-classified' language data. Besides novel means of conceptualising primary data, incorporating ontological difference in anthropological methodology will also open up the possibility of revisiting existing language data and untying it from its Western naturalist framework. Once disconnected from foreign classificatory systems, a re-evaluation of secondary data can still offer valuable insights into different ontological systems and thus expand our knowledge of 'foreign worlds'. Since this is the mode of investigation I have chosen for my analysis of possessive relationships in native Amazonian languages, effects of this approach will be illustrated in chapter 5.

Even though a complete paradigm shift within the field of anthropology will be a protracted process, I believe that it is the necessary step that needs to be taken once ontological differences are taken into the 'anthropological equation'. As a result, once the nature of alterity between people is based on a theory of multiple realities, the very nature of a genuine ontological approach will logically lead to the conclusion that Western analytical concepts must also be rooted in a very distinctive ontology. Therefore, ontological anthropology will require Western scholars to go beyond "the bars of our metaphysical cage, so as to be able to have a look at that cage (as it were) from the outside" (Viveiros de Castro 2011: 129), they need to move past the simple conceptualisation of foreign realities, equally reflect on their own version of reality and determine their own ontological foundation. This re-evaluation of a Western version of reality will require scholars to question their previous understanding of humanness, deconstruct the seemingly 'inherent' and expose what is disguised as 'nature' or 'natural'. In the next section I want to look at a possible conceptualisation of such a Western ontology.

3.2 A WESTERN ONTOLOGY: CHALLENGING THE 'NATURAL'

> *"Acknowledgment of the particular standpoint from which we theorise others' difference allows us to go beyond **them** and arrive at **us**" (Horton 2013: 7)*

When defining a Western ontology, scholars often look at notions on how knowledge comes to be in Western philosophy and science, which is expressed in the study of epistemology. Comparing theories of epistemology with foreign ontological theories on the nature and origin of knowledge, scholars have pointed out the deep entrenchment of Western epistemology in a naturalist conception of the world, which led to a common classification of a Western ontology as 'naturalism'. This notion of naturalism as a Western ontology, according to Descola, "seems so well established by the histories of science and philosophy that it may seem hardly necessary to produce any circumstantial justification for it" (Descola 2013: 173). Schafersman (1997) raises four tenets of NATURE in a naturalist philosophy, which place a naturalist ontology on a very distinct foundation:

1) Nature is all there is and whatever exists or happens is natural
2) Nature (the universe or cosmos) consists only of natural elements, that is, of spatiotemporal material elements - matter and energy - and non-material elements - mind, ideas, values, logical relationships, mathematical laws, etc.
3) Nature operates by natural processes that follow natural laws and can, in principle, be explained and understood by science and philosophy
4) The supernatural does not exist. Since only nature is real, the supernatural cannot be not real

This model illustrates that within a naturalist tradition nothing can exist outside nature and that the world is based on clear-cut concepts of materiality, where the 'immaterial' is strongly distinguished from the 'material' (*body vs. soul* or *body vs. mind*). Within this natural world, humans, connected through the exclusive attribute of 'humanity', reside alongside a multitude of animate and inanimate entities. Even though a large number of Western citizens believe their own species to have evolved from an animal species, humankind is perceived as being elevated from its ancestral basis by one integral distinguishing factor, namely *self-conception* or *consciousness*. This ability to reflect on one's existence and understand oneself as an individual is seen as an inherently human quality which places humans in a very special position in a hierarchy of animacy. Through means of signification and the realisation of shared intentionality, humans are able to cooperate and 'cultivate' the nature they inhabit and thus distinguish themselves from another through different manifestations of culture (Descola 2013; Tomasello 2008).

What is central to the idea of humanity within a naturalist tradition is a distinct conception of 'the self'. In this regard, Santos-Granero proposes a very intriguing way of classifying Western naturalist ontologies, by looking at diverging concepts of personhood (which he refers to as 'beinghood') between a Western and an Amerindian ontology. His basic theory of Western naturalism deals with "[t]he modern Western notion linking personhood to the individual – that which cannot be further divided", whose roots, according to Santos-Granero, are found in the works of early Christian intellectuals, among them St. Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas presents a conception of body which he defines as "a rational individual whose substance is complete, in that it is not part of anything else; it subsists in itself insofar as it exists on its own and not in another, and it is separate from all else for it exists apart from others" (Aquinas 1920: III, q. 16, art. 12 in Santos-Granero 2012: 181). By contrasting the Thomist idea of the 'complete, independent and indivisible individual' with a notion of compositional personhood within the Amerindian group of the Yanesha, which acknowledges the "creational, generative, and socializing contributions of a variety of human and nonhuman entities" in the formation of a person's subjectivity, Santos-Granero illustrates how diverging views of personhood profoundly change peoples' perception of the world and he convincingly points out that the indivisibility of the self is heavily entrenched in the modern Western tradition (Santos-Granero 2012).

To conclude this brief analysis of the foundation of a Western ontology, I want to note that although individual definitions might differ slightly, the general idea of Western societies being strongly enrooted in a naturalist ontology appears to be well established across the scientific community. This ontological naturalism rests on a distinctive set of conceptual pillars. At the heart of naturalism, as the name suggests, lies the idea of a 'nature', "the unmarked state and common ground that unites all beings, from which multiple cultures, or a so-called multiculturalism, emerge" (Halbmayer 2012: 107). This 'nature' is all-encompassing and defined through its quantifiable laws and rejection of the supernatural. Within this nature, humans, who define themselves through an indivisible and complete nature stand on top of a hierarchy of animate beings. Humans then cultivate nature and 'form culture', which in turn presents the distinguishing factor between different groups of humans. What I want to stress again is that the definition of naturalism as a Western ontological basis must not be seen as an attempt to create another 'us' vs. 'them' paradigm as perpetuated by multicultural models, but should merely provide scholars with an understanding of their own referential framework for their 'conceptualisation of foreign ontologies' (see Holbraad in aforementioned quote) (Carrithers et al. 2010).

3.3 ANIMISM: A SOURCE OF ONTOLOGICAL OTHERNESS

*"if their animist reality is not the same as our own naturalistic version, how we can understand it though a theoretical apparatus that assumes that it is?" (*Hugh-Jones in Brightman et al. 2012: xii*)*

Now that I have illustrated attempts to outline a Western ontology, I will turn to animism[4], an ontology that stands in such strong contrast to the naturalist tradition that Descola called it the opposite of naturalism (Descola 2013). A central notion of the animist tradition is that attributes which are generally portrayed as exclusively human, such as shared intentionality or reflexivity are not limited to humans but can also be found in nonhuman persons. The roots for this can be found all over Amerindian mythologies, which speak of an "original state" in which there was no differentiation between humans and animals. Contrary to depictions of Western science, what

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[4] I will use the term 'animism' here as an umbrella term which should include the notions of 'shamanism' and 'perspectivism' (as promoted by Viveiros de Castro (1998; 2004). Although their meanings slightly diverge from the former, I do believe that they share the same essential conceptual basis. Furthermore, I will only treat Amerindian animism in this paper; however, I do acknowledge that other animist forms, such as Siberian animism differ from Amazonian forms.

connected the two species in the beginning was not animality, but humanity. Thus it is not humans that have 'evolved' from animals but rather animals having lost their human attributes (*animals as ex-humans vs. humans as ex-animals*) (Viveiros de Castro 2004: 465). However, just as humans are still said to carry animalistic features, shared human features from the original state are today still contained in the internal form of beings from many species (Viveiros de Castro 1998; 2004; Halbmayer 2012). What disguises this internal form - the vessel that contains the soul or spirit of a person - is generally described as someone's 'clothing' in the Amerindian animist tradition. This 'clothing' represents someone's external form, which is, for example, the physical appearance of an animal that a human would perceive. Conversely, animals will equally see themselves as human-like and others as 'animals' or spirits (only trans-specific beings such as shamans have the ability to see through the external form of persons). The particular clothing something or someone is wearing is not fixed or predetermined but can be changed or removed (Viveiros de Castro 1998; 2004).

Due to the attribution of human-like characteristics to nonhumans, the classic naturalistic distinction between NATURE and CULTURE cannot be drawn in an animist ontology. Rather, the animist system in current theories is referred to as an inversion to naturalism", or "multinaturalism" (Viveiros de Castro 1998), where "the universality of the condition of a moral subject and the relations between humans and nonhumans that this authorizes override the physical heterogeneity of the various classes of existing beings" (Descola 2013: 199). This physical homogenisation opens to possibility for cross-specific interaction and reciprocal influence between humans and nonhumans. So while in a naturalist system of "multiculturalism", many cultures exist within one all-encompassing nature, animism presents a system of absolute opposition, where CULTURE is portrayed as surrounding NATURE. This means that in animism the unmarked state that unites all beings is not NATURE but a "common spiritual interiority", from which multiple natures emerge (Halbmayer 2012: 107). As a direct result, in an Amerindian animist tradition "there are no autonomous, natural facts, for what we see as nature is seen by other species as culture" (Viveiros de Castro 2004: 474).

This animist ontology challenges the Western hierarchy of animate beings, in which nonhumans are largely instrumentalised (except for the occasional pet) and set apart from any other living organism. Due to the fact that in a Native American animist ontology, humans and nonhumans can share the same origin of humanity, nonhuman beings are seen as following traditional societal practices; they live among human-like social communities and are thus portrayed in an egalitarian, rather than hierarchical way. A jaguar drinking blood can be equated to a human drinking manioc beer, an animal's fur can be compared to human body ornaments and their shelters are perceived as human villages and houses (Viveiros de Castro 1998). Also, due to this non-hierarchical coexistence, reciprocal communication and transformation processes can take place between beings of different species. It is important to note that agency or animation are not prerequisites for achieving a form of personhood; also plants, souls and other inanimate entities can carry forms of personification and agentivity. The many persons and subjectivities resulting from this distinction are created and define themselves through interrelationships, therefore "[w]e are confronted with multi-dividuals or multividuals, multiply partible persons beyond an undividable individual or a dualist dividual" (Halbmayer 2012: 110).

3.3.1. FABRICATION OF BODY AND SUBJECTIVITY

While naturalist theory portrays the human body as a complete and indivisible entity, the individual's body within the system of an animist ontology constitutes a locus of constant change. Bodies and personhoods are subjected to a multitude of internal, external, human and nonhuman influences that together create a very complex fabric of identity and self, which is constantly re-evaluated and never complete. Drawing on Strathern's (1990: 13) work on personhood in Melanesian societies in which she classifies the singular person as 'a social microcosm', considering both persons and inanimate entities as objectifications of the social

relations that go into their making, Santos Granero (2012: 183) points out that due to the general focus on social relations, Western scholars have largely disregarded the material dimension of people-making processes. While the social relations undoubtedly play an essential part in the constitution of the self, Santos Granero is addressing actual material incorporation (in the literal sense of *incorporation* as 'forming into body') of substances and materials, claiming that it is not only the generative and societal input that shapes persons but also tangible and physical entities; as a desired result of the incorporation of a substance, the body will assimilate subjectivities of the absorbed entity (Santos Granero 2012: 183). He supports this claim with traditions he observed while studying the Yanesha (Arawakan), an indigenous group of people living in the Peruvian Amazon. The Yanesha have treatments which 'involve the ritual manipulation of different animals, plants, and artefacts, either to obtain from them desired features, or to inoculate their children against unwanted traits' (Santos Granero 2012: 190). These objects are used to bestow certain attributes upon a person, such as a long life, a good bone structure and posture and character traits like 'not crying too much'. For example, a mother can bathe her baby in the extract of a plant that is known for its resilience in order for it to have a long life. Such attributes can be acquired in various ways, such as consumption and inhalation of substances or infused baths and as a result, bestowed affects can then be viewed as "extensions of self" (Santos Granero 2012; McCallum 2001). In addition to this direct material input, gifts can also contribute to the fabrication of a person's body. Since a self-made gift carries a part of the identity of the maker, this subjectivity can be transferred and have an impact on the receiver. Through constant close proximity (e.g. by wearing something) or special ensoulment rituals, objects can then become a part of the owner's body (Santos Granero 2009: 119-122, Santos Granero 2012).

3.3.2. MASTERY

As briefly outlined earlier, due to the lack of a clear hierarchy of animate beings in an animist ontology which is replaced by a "horizontal conception of social relations" (Fausto 2008: 1), relationships between species are organised in a manner very different to a naturalist tradition. The possibility of reciprocal exchange between species opens up ways of communication that might appear rather alien to Western academia and thus have to be accurately portrayed in order not to become diluted or falsified. Since the attribute of humanity is not exclusive to humans but found in a variety of animate beings, the nature of the conceptual relation in possessive relationships cannot be portrayed as a monodirectional exertion of control by a human PR but must be adjusted to the prevalent animist system. In order to accurately depict relationships across species I turn to Fausto, whose work on MASTERY in Native Amazonia can contribute much to the understanding of issues regarding Amerindian forms of POSSESSION.

The concept of MASTERY is a native Amerindian concept which represents a central category for understanding indigenous Amerindian sociology and cosmology and can thus be expected to be found under many different labels in all Amazonian languages and language families, e.g. *kande* (Suya), *wököti* (Yawalapiti), *oto* (Kuikuro), *ñã* (Araweté) (Fausto 2008). MASTERY describes a native Amerindian mode of relationship that can be applied to humans, nonhumans and also inanimate entities. The central figure of this relationship is an 'owner-master', whose influence over another entity is characterised by possession and control, but also an additional element of care. MASTERY denotes a relational connection in which masters protect and control their subjects but also bear a responsibility for their well-being (Fausto 2008). As a consequence, power over a subject can solely be established and sustained by a process of reciprocity, a give and take. This also has an important effect on the temporal duration of forms of control, which are not indefinite and can be renegotiated in this model. Since the element of reciprocity calls for a more regular evaluation process so as to sustain a possessive relationship, its character becomes less permanent than ownership relations.

Masters can appear on every level of social interaction between beings, from parental

relations (care and protection for children in return for control), leadership settings (protection and care in return for people's allegiance), material ownership (object maintenance in return for control) to immaterial ownership (preservation of rituals, stories or songs in order to sustain control); as Fausto notes, "The owner is, then, a double-sided figure: in the eyes of his children-pets, a protective father; in the eyes of other species (especially humans), a predatory affine" (Fausto 2008: 6). It is important to note that within this typology, the master is seen as 'a plural singularity', 'the form through which a plurality appears as a singularity to others' (Fausto 2008: 6). This means that, for example, a leader/master of a village represents the collectivity of his followership and makes decisions in their names. This collectivity must not only been seen on a personal level but can also extend to a cosmic scale, where each species is seen as having a primordial master, who stands for the entirety of the species (Guss 1989:52).

I hope that these arguments make it clear why this indigenous notion should not be compared to the Western concept of OWNERSHIP. First of all, it is very important that while OWNERSHIP is largely restricted to material objects in Western capitalist systems which regulate and prescribe the rights and duties of owners in written jurisdictions, MASTERY in Native Amazonia is a much more complex idea which appears on both material and immaterial levels of societal organisation. Within a hierarchy of species which favours human beings, possessive relationships of OWNERSHIP between humans and nonhuman entities are turned into nothing but an act of seizing control over an entity. In stark contrast to this monodirectional control, MASTERY is built on a more egalitarian organisation between members of different species. The increased sense of equality has the effect that control over an entity cannot simply be forced, but has to be agreed upon. In order to uphold a long-lasting relationship of MASTERY, a PR can only gain control over an entity by providing protection and care in exchange. As a result of the very different natures of these two concepts, we do not only need to acknowledge that MASTERY is a specific indigenous concept whose roots are strongly entrenched in an animist ontology, but also conversely that OWNERSHIP cannot be assumed to play an important part in such a world. Just as most inhabitants of Western societies would probably agree that relationships with inanimate objects do not include a reciprocal element of protection and care in their social organisation, Amerindians should not be portrayed as simple 'owners' of things.

I believe, however, that just as many other native ways of living, the indigenous concept of MASTERY is currently undergoing a transition process due to the increasing presence of Western influences in the daily lives of many native Amazonians. The introduction of increasing numbers of foreign material goods into the Amerindian social cosmos will most likely have already led to a 'lexicalisation process of MASTERY', where monodirectional OWNERSHIP penetrates native ontological conceptions of POSSESSION and thereby alters traditional notions of relations between members of different species. Nevertheless, despite the threat that Western lifestyles pose to the preservation of native concepts, which, in turn, have an effect on the semantic make-up of MASTERY, I still believe that it is vital to acknowledge it in its traditional function and document it as such.

Furthermore, I very briefly want to raise the issue of whether the label 'mastery' accurately portrays the underlying possessive relationships of the concept or whether the lexeme carries too many negative connotations of domination and control in English-speaking societies to appropriately reflect the element of reciprocity that is involved in the relational process of MASTERY[5]. Although Fausto convincingly points out the predatory and dominant aspects of the relationship ("familiarizing predation" and "adoptive filiation", see Fausto 1999), I believe that it might be worth thinking about a new sub-classification of the concept in the context of POSSESSION. An alternative conceptualisation could facilitate the process for Western science to disconnect 'mastery' from sheer monodirectional exertions of power (as the definition of the terms suggests in English) and pay recognition to MASTERY's unique reciprocal nature.

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[5] This thought stems from a conversation with Felix Ameka

4. ONTOLOGY AND POSSESSION

Having illustrated two oppositional ontologies, I now want to establish how ontological differences can manifest themselves in the actual language of people. My line of thinking here is quite simple, really. At the foundation of my theory of POSSESSION lies the general conviction that in human languages linguistic expressions represent mental concepts; the signifier refers to the signified. In the last chapter, I then put forward the proposition that different ontologies can fundamentally alter conceptual domains of persons. Once the mental conception of the world is based on a divergent set of pillars, a people's language will naturally represent this altered ontological foundation. I want to illustrate this by revisiting my visual model of CONCEPTUAL POSSESSION.
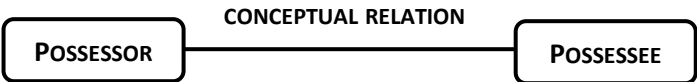

Figure 2: Model conceptual possession

As mentioned before, this model is concerned with three basic components: a possessor, a possessee and a conceptual relation between the two entities. I will now go on to show that individual ontologies have the power to significantly affect all three components of this model of POSSESSION and that, as a direct effect, these changes will also manifest themselves in the linguistic representations of CONCEPTUAL POSSESSION. For the purpose of substantiating this idea, I will take both Western naturalism and Amerindian animism and present the individual impact that they have on the theoretical model.

4.1   WESTERN NATURALISM

Earlier in this work, I raised the hypothesis that the English language of POSSESSION currently does not prototypically refer to the CONCEPTUAL POSSESSION but to CONCEPTUAL OWNERSHIP, a possessive relationship based on an element of control and domination. The fact that within a naturalist ontology, humans are take up the paramount position in an inter-specific hierarchy of animate beings leads me to propose the idea that the relational monodirectionality as expressed by linguistic possessive constructions in English has its roots in a naturalist ontology. Since humans are portrayed above all other species and nonhumans are largely instrumentalised in a natural ontological conception, it only makes sense for me to conclude from this that any established form of POSSESSION (as opposed to inherent forms, such as kinship and part-whole) will present itself in a asymmetric and dominant fashion. The naturalistically motivated hierarchical Western thinking can thus also be portrayed on a conceptual level of POSSESSION, where the conceptual relation between a PR and a PE constitutes a monodirectional top-down exertion of control, meaning that the PR takes or seizes control of a PE, which merely acts as 'the controlled'.
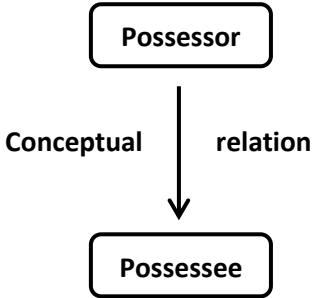

Figure 3: Possession within Western naturalism

The influence of a naturalist ontology can not only be seen in the nature of the conceptual relation, but also strongly affects both the PR and PE in this model. As pointed out in the previous chapter, in a naturalist ontology the body or self of a person presents an indivisible and complete entity which exists independently from others. Because of this, personal, established possessive relationships have no direct impact on the personhood. This is not to say that in Western cultures, a person cannot be influenced by consanguineal relations, what this refers to is rather that material possessive relations which are generally presented by OWNERSHIP will not be permitted direct impact on the subjectivity of a PR and could thus be portrayed as collections on an external level to a person's corporeality.

4.2 AMERINDIAN ANIMISM

Because animism is described as inversionist and oppositional to naturalism, the ontology also exhibits profound differences in regards to the naturalist conceptual basis of POSSESSION. Due to the lack of a clearly defined hierarchy of beings in an animist world where the notion of NATURE does not draw a clear line across-species, an exertion of POSSESSION does not automatically include an added element of control and domination such as seen in Western forms. This means that the nature of the conceptual relation between a PR and a PE must be re-evaluated in such an ontological system. Here I propose to apply insights gained from Fausto's work on Amerindian MASTERY, which essentially provides a theoretical framework for defining conceptual relationships in Native Amazonian societies. The nature of the possessive relationship in MASTERY is at its core defined through reciprocity. Different from an 'owner' in Western possession, one cannot be the master over an entity by simply exerting control. Rather, the establishment and maintenance of a relationship of MASTERY demands an active exchange of care, control or protection (Fausto 2008). Only if both parties contribute to the relationship can MASTERY function. Thus, the double-sided arrow in below model signifies the reciprocal communication and exchange that take place in a setting of Amerindian MASTERY.
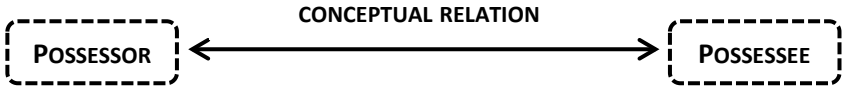
Figure 4: Possession within Amerindian animism

As for the PR and PE, I also propose to adopt changes to the model of CONCEPTUAL POSSESSION. Due to the fact that personhood in an animist ontology is viewed as a fluent notion where a multitude of relational input comes together to form subjectivity and the self, influence of the PE on the PR must diverge considerably from a naturalist idea of POSSESSION. In this Amerindian model the concept of a person's body is not fixed (as illustrated by the dotted outlines) and is therefore susceptible of change by the PE. As a result, possessive relations can not only contribute to the personhood of the PR but also have the power to change its composition and thereby transform it. In this view, I follow Halbmayer, who promotes the idea that different natures of being in the world form different mereologies (parthoods) (Halbmayer 2012). This also means that it will not be possible to draw differentiations along the parameter of alienability between a PR and a PE, as commonly seen in Western possessive classifications, since within an animist ontology in which subjectivity is seen as a social fabric, different human and nonhuman persons will exhibit different definitions of what can or cannot be alienated from someone's personhood.

5. CASE STUDY: RE-EVALUATING LINGUISTIC POSSESSION IN NATIVE AMAZONIA

If scholars accept the premise that different ontologies present speakers with different concepts to think about, it will be the task of anthropological linguists to take ontological notions into consideration when documenting foreign language systems. Only once ontological differences are acknowledged will it be possible to stop classifying foreign languages along inherently Western categories and thus dilute native concepts and falsify their depiction in Western societies. Over the past decades numerous scientific works have heatedly debated questions such as "how much do Amerindians 'own'?" or "what can they even 'own'?", when the antecedent question should have been "what is OWNERSHIP and does it exist outside Western societies?" Thus, it should be clear that once foreign concepts are judged along unfit parameters, no useful data and results can be expected from such analyses whatsoever.

Having proposed concrete ontological differences in the foundational human domain of POSSESSION, I will now look at linguistic data in order to show how Amerindian animism leaves analysable traces in the languages of people. For this purpose, I will analyse possessive constructions in two native Amazonian languages from two separate language families. Here, it is important to point out that the aim of this analysis is to 'conceptualise', instead of 'explain' or 'interpret' as called for by Holbraad, so as to not use Western analytical concepts to make sense of ethnographic data and thus reinforce prevalent misunderstandings (Holbraad in Carrithers et al. 2010: 184).

My methodology in this analysis will be to first identify forms of linguistic POSSESSION in an Amerindian language and investigate how they are currently represented in a Western scientific community. As a second step, I will try to demarcate the nature of entities that can be included in a given possessive construction. This will enable me to draw up a rough semantic map of the linguistic construction and determine in what way it can be connected to animism as its ontological foundation.

5.1 CARIBAN: TRIO

The Trio are agriculturalist hunter-gatherers who live in Suriname and across the border in Brazil, they did not have any steady contact with national societies until the 1960s and have managed to sustain their traditional life and values to a great extent (Riviere 2000: 253). This is very important for my analysis because I assume that within native groups who now live in large permanent settlements and have adopted Western societal and economic practices (such as a monetary system and an abundance of Western products) it will be much harder to trace anything more than mere remnants or partially lexicalised forms of formerly complex native conceptualisations, enrooted in an animist ontology. Until a few decades ago, the Trio relied strongly on their own self sufficient manufacturing of goods and little trade with neighbouring tribes like the Waiwai, from whom they would receive goods such as manioc graters or hunting dogs and in turn trade these for manufactured goods from the Surinamese capital Paramaribo with neighbouring Maroons (Mans 2011: 148). Even though the Trio are nowadays incorporating Western technology and modern goods into their lifestyle, I still expect to find possessive relationships in their language that differ from notions of monodirectional control, property and ownership as found in modern Western societies.

In her grammar on the Trio language, Carlin (2004) dedicates an entire chapter to POSSESSION, focusing on the possessive constructions that are represented as '*have* constructions' in the English translations. Although this specific classification of possession only covers the translated counterparts of English forms of predicative '*have*-possession' and does therefore not represent the full spectrum of linguistic possession in Trio (which, for example, does not feature a verb for predicative possession), it works very well as a framework for my

proposed approach, which aims to detect and uncover semantic misconceptions and misinterpretations of possessive relationships that were created by overlooking underlying ontological notions.

Carlin states that the issue of alienable and inalienable possession is not relevant in Trio and therefore she classifies possessive constructions "along the temporal parameters of 'now', 'temporary' or 'transient', and 'permanent' as well as along some subparameters of 'acquired', 'partial' and others" (Carlin 2004: 459). This leads to her classification of three different types of possession in Trio:

Immediate possession
(16) Possessum   IS   Possessor-LOC
     mararia epi   nai   ji-wein-je
     'I have malaria tablets on me' (Carlin 2004: 459)

Temporary controlled possession
(17) Possessum   its-owner   IS   Possessor
     wïrapa   entume   nai   pahko
     'my father has some bows' (Carlin 2004: 459)

Permanent possession
(18) *tï*-Possessum-with   IS   Possessor
     tï-karakuri-ke   nai   jipawana
     'my friend has money' (Carlin 2004: 459)

5.1.1. IMMEDIATE POSSESSION
Immediate Possession in Trio is used to indicate that an animate PR has (or carries) an inanimate PE **on**, **by** or **with** them. This is expressed by the indeterminate locative postposition *weinje* (glossed 'side.NOM-LOC') and a possessive prefix to indicate the possessor (Carlin 2004: 460). The term 'immediate' categorizes this possession type along the temporal parameter of 'now' and it can also denote the possibly short nature of the possessive relationship.

(19)   karakuri   n-a-∅-i   ji-wein-je
       money   3→3.1TR-be-PRES-NCERT   1-side.NOM-LOC
       'I have money on me (money is at/by me)' (Carlin 2004: 460)

(20)   ë-panpira   n-a-∅-i   ë-wein-je
       2POSS-paper   3→3.1TR-be-PRES-NCERT   2-side.NOM-LOC
       'have you got your letter (or I.D. card) on you? (is your letter on you?)' (Carlin 2004: 460)

A closer look at both (19) and (20) reveals that the main focus of this possessive construction appears to lie on the location of the PE (in the sense that an object is 'by one's side') rather than its relationship or association with a PR. Instead of stressing that the money is affiliated with the PR in (19), on a surface structure the phrase merely expresses the fact that money is located close to the PR. Even though the context implies that it is the PR's money, it is not a prerequisite. This concept seems very similar to what Heine defines as 'physical possession', for which he gives the example '*I want to fill in this form; do you have a pen*?' (2001: 312). He adds that whether this construction should be considered as a possessive one or not can be disputed. Since both 'physical possession' and 'immediate possession' appear to be concerned with the locality and availability of an item rather than its affiliation to someone, one might question whether they should belong to the possessive vocabulary of a language.

Aiming to conceptualise this construction, I think it is important to point out how problematic the use of the English verb 'have' is here, which suggests ownership. However,

objectively speaking, the construction itself first and foremost expresses locality; POSSESSION can or cannot be an implication of the locative in the above examples. This view is also supported by the fact that the entity in question is the subject of the sentence in Trio, which is defined through its proximity to someone rather than an element of control over the subject. However, once the construction is translated with 'have', it is automatically connected to a form of predicative possession. The immediate connection of [PROXIMITY TO ITEM] and [CONTROL OF ITEM] such as in "have you got it on you?" appears to me as a specific cultural characteristic that has its roots in Western streams of thought. This does not mean that I am denying this construction its possessive properties. All I want to point attention to is that it would be wrong to jump from 'a boat is by me' to the conclusion 'it is my boat' because even though the former can imply the latter, an automatic assumption would overshadow the phrase's non-normative locational element, which lies at its core and is not connected to a form of possession. So we can see that even though this construction prototypically merely expresses the location of an object and, for that matter, does not appear to exhibit any special entrenchment in an animist ontology, the short analysis of this construction in Trio does illustrate an instance where a Western concept can potentially alter the perception of foreign language systems. Such ethnocentric practices do not only have the power to distort the representation of a linguistic construction but also falsify possible inferences that are drawn about speaker's mental concepts.

5.1.2. TEMPORARY CONTROLLED POSSESSION

This possessive construction in Trio is used to describe a relationship in which a human PR who acts as an *entu* - a concept in Trio which is translated as 'owner' or 'boss' - possesses something that can be given away. This is linguistically expressed through a noun (PE) followed by *entu* + -*me*, a facsimile marker whose meaning in this particular construction is defined as 'being in a state of', and the PR marked on the verb. Carlin describes the literal meaning of this construction as "I am N's owner" but adds that it is a transient form of ownership, which entails "having s/thing to spare" or "having extra of something that you can give to someone else" (Carlin 2004: 461). The designation *temporary controlled possession* therefore addresses a temporarily restricted form of ownership that is characterised by its ephemeral nature.

(21)　maja　　　∅-entu-me　　　　w-a-∅-e
　　　knife　　　3POSS-owner-FACS　　1→3.1TR-be-PRES-CERT
　　　　　　　　'I have a knife (I have one to give away)' (Carlin 2004: 461)

(22)　karakuri　∅-entu-me　　　　m-ana-∅-n
　　　money　　3POSS-owner-FACS　　2→3.1TR-be-PRES-NCERT
　　　'have you got (enough) money? (Have you got money to spare?)' (Carlin 2004: 461)

In order to accurately assess the meaning of this construction it will be essential to first characterise the core component the phrase evolves around, which is the lexeme[6] *entu*. At first sight, the meaning of the word appears to be very close to the English concept of OWNERSHIP since it expresses a relationship that is defined by temporarily restricted possession and control. However, the fact that *entu* is not only used to refer to the owner and boss of an entity but also to 'trunk of tree', 'foot of mountain' or 'horizon' suggests that the semantic make-up must differ from a prototypically Western notion of OWNERSHIP. What supports this belief is the fact that the use of *entu* is not only restricted to the possessive relationship between people and tradable material goods but that a person can also be a *pata entu* (boss of a village) or *tuna entu* (the person who is responsible for the water supply in a village) (Carlin, personal communication).

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[6] I deliberately avoid the use of inherently Western grammatical categorisations, such as *noun*, *adjective* or *verb* due to the fact that the syntactic and semantic delineation of such classifications cannot be assumed to be congruent across languages, an idea stimulated by Croft's work on Radical Construction Grammar (Croft 2005).

Being the *entu* of an entity does therefore not only express domination and control, but also comes with a certain level of responsibility and care. For example, the *pata-entu* does not only get the power as the chief of the village but also has the responsibility to sustain peace and order within the community, otherwise he will be replaced or people will leave the village (Carlin, personal communication). Due to such semantic deviations, I propose that this possessive construction in Trio should not be portrayed as an instance of OWNERSHIP, whose roots are found in materialist and capitalist societies.

Rather, the fact that the meaning of the noun *entu* clearly diverges from mere forms of OWNERSHIP leads me to connect it to the concept of MASTERY. As outlined in the previous chapter on MASTERY, key attributes that define the concept are the idea of singular pluralities and the reciprocal exchange in which control is achieved through protection and care, rather than monodirectional domination. Both of these attributes can be found in the use of *entu* in Trio, even if not always on a surface level. While the connection to an animist ontology and MASTERY is more apparent when talking about the 'master-controller/leader of a village', where the *entu* represents the plurality of his followers, it becomes more abstract when considering examples such as (21) or (22) above. I do acknowledge that saying that the relationship between an *entu* and their knife or money is based on the very same idea of reciprocity, of protection and care in exchange for control, might appear alienating to some and could lead to an exoticisation of Amerindians. However, I believe that animist notions such as *entu* or MASTERY are not exclusive categories but should rather be portrayed as a gradual system. As a result of such a progressive view, I expect reciprocal possessive relationships to be more overt when considering relations between two animate entities (which carry more traces of their 'original state of humanity'), while they will appear less obvious in connection with inanimate objects (whose connection to forms of humanity is more abstract). What this implies is that it would be wrong to exclude any particular entity from the notion of MASTERY, since the line of animacy in Native Amazonia cannot be as clearly drawn than in the Western world. Furthermore, due to the belief that the subjectivity of the maker can be incorporated into a produced item (Santos Granero 2012; McCallum 2001), it would not appear far-fetched to expect MASTERY to also be involved with human attributes that are contained in manufactured objects. In such fabrication processes, elements of reciprocity and care can be seen in the way the maker transforms a crude material, gives it form and shapes it into a new object. In return, the maker projects subjectivity onto an item and thus achieves affiliation with it during the manufacturing process.

Another aspect of *entu*-constructions that speaks for their connection to the animist notion of MASTERY is the impermanent nature of the possessive relationship. As Carlin points out, (21) and (22) do not only express control over an entity but also convey the idea of non-fixedness in a PE's affiliation with a PR. In stark contrast to an 'owner' in Western societies, if someone expresses that they are the *entu* of a material object, they do not only draw attention to their affiliation with the item but also the possibility of separation. The facsimile marker *–me* underlines the transient nature of the form of possession and making use of this construction not only serves a purely declarative purpose in order to express an item's affiliation with someone, but it also indicates the PR's willingness to part with the PE. In an interrogatory context this possessive phrase therefore explicitly expresses a request to acquire an item in question and would conversely not be used for a purely informative purpose (Carlin 2004: 461). This re-evaluation of possessive relationships on a regular basis is an important feature in Fausto's account of MASTERY, which reinforces my motivation to portray *entu*-constructions in Trio as an instance of animist MASTERY.

Once POSSESSION is regarded as one of the fundamental human domains which can tell us much about the way people perceive their conceptual relationships in this world, it becomes clear why it is so crucial to accurately conceptualise a notion such as *entu* and disconnect it from Western OWNERSHIP. In Trio, the lexeme *entu* is a pervasive concept that if found throughout the language and in connection with a multitude of material and immaterial entities. Once this

possessive relationship is labelled as OWNERSHIP, the implication will be that 'the Trio own almost everything', while my proposition would be that 'the Trio do not *own* at all', since OWNERSHIP is nothing but an imported Western concept. Saying that 'the Trio don't own' does in no way mean that they do not have possessive relationships based on control; their nature is simply a different one. Even though such fine-grained distinctions might appear as pure nitpicking to some, they can make an enormous difference in the overall perception and depiction of groups of people. I really want to stress here that the conceptual width of *entu* cannot be covered by the term 'owner' or 'boss' and that its underrepresentation consequently causes a distortion in the conceptualisation of possessive relationships in the Trio community. In my opinion, the best solution to this problem would be to grant autonomy to the Amerindian 'master-controller' classification so as to capture the full semantic layout of the concept. However, using western terminology, I find the label 'temporary controlled possession' as suggested by Carlin very fitting because it captures both the element of control as well as the temporal limitation to the relationship.

5.1.3. PERMANENT POSSESSION

Carlin classifies this possessive construction in Trio as the expression of "either inherent or acquired possession", where the longevity and stability of relationships between kin and part-whole relationships are pooled with the exclusivity of private ownership (Carlin 2004: 462). What connects these very different possessive relationships is the temporal element of permanency. The construction assumes the form *tï-N-ke*, where the semantically bleached third person coreferential possessive prefix *tï-* is added to the possessed noun, as well as the suffixed instrumental *–ke*, whose English translation is defined as "being equipped with N" or "having enough of N for oneself" (Carlin 2004).

(23) t-ëhke-ke   m-ana-∅-n
      COREF-hammock-INST   2→3.1TR-be-PRES-NCERT
      'have you got a hammock (do you own a hammock, are you behammocked)?' (Carlin 2004: 464)

(24) tï-papa-ke   n-a-∅-I,   tï-mama-ke   mare
      COREF-father-INST   3→3.1TR-be-PRES-NCERT   COREF-mother –INST   also
      'he has a father and a mother too' (Carlin 2004: 463)

As the relatively wide semantic spectrum of both relational and material entities included in this construction already suggests, this type of possessive relationship is found in many different conversational contexts and includes a broad variety of animate and inanimate entities in Trio. A first look at the possessed entities featured in (23) and (24), where the same grammatical construction is used to refer to both the possessive relationship between a PR and their 'hammock' and another PR and their 'parents', suggests that it can be indeed used to indicate both intimate and established forms of possession. This view would be supported by further documented examples from this possessive construction in Trio, which feature a wide variety of PE's, such as 'mother', 'father', 'hammock', 'knife', 'necklace' or 'fishtrap' (Carlin 2004). In addition, it is interesting to note that the *tï-N-ke* construction can also be used to express mereological relationships, such as "a rock has holes in it" (Carlin, personal communication).

One classificatory problem here seems to be that while it is possible to use "equipped with" or "having enough for oneself" to account for the construction's use with non-human entities such as 'hammocks' or 'knives', the application of this conceptualisation seems rather unsuitable to express kinship and part-whole relations. This suggests that the semantic map of the construction must exceed notions of mere external equipment of entities, such as in Western notions of 'ownership'. Although this type of possession does include relationships between a human PR and material objects which resemble OWNERSHIP on a surface level, CONTROL or DOMINATION do not seem to be salient semantic features. This view is supported when

considering the fact that the Trio vocabulary offers inherently possessed and unpossessed words for specific lexical constructions.

(25) weitapi   Ø-entu-me   m-ana-Ø-n   (*ehke Ø-entu-me m-ana-Ø-n)
     hammock   3POSS-owner-FACS   2→3.1TR-be-PRES-NCERT
     'have you got a spare hammock (that I can use)?' (Carlin 2004: 464)

When comparing (23) and (25), we can see that 'hammock' can be expressed both by *ëhke* and *weitapi* and while the former is found only in inherently possessed settings, the unpossessed form is found in '*entu*-constructions'. Furthermore, being the *entu* of a hammock in (25) expresses a clear request of a person to use or acquire the item in question, whereas (23) is in no way considered a request but serves a purely informative purpose, where someone is inquiring whether another person is 'with hammock' or, as Carlin suggests 'behammocked' (Carlin, personal communication). The fact that besides part-whole and kinship relations, the *tï-N-ke* construction appears to include only items whose relationship to a PR is defined through an increased level of association and intimacy rather than control suggests that such entities are given an extraordinary status which has to be clearly dissociated from OWNERSHIP.

     What need to be determined in order to accurately conceptualise this status are shared features of the relationship between a person and their hammock, a PR and their parents and that between a rock and its holes. Here, I hypothesise that what combines these very different entities is that they can all, in one way or the other, be considered as constituting a part of the PR. Reflecting on the framework of an animist ontology as outlined in the previous chapter, wherein a body is seen as a locus of change and personhood as a transient state of both social and material fabrication, I hypothesise that the relationships presented in this possessive construction in Trio represent active contributions to the body and self of the PR. As McCallum, who suggests that affects of a material entity can be viewed as "extensions of self" which leave a direct imprint on a person's body, I believe that material entities in the *tï-N-ke* construction can be equally seen as belonging to the corporeality of the PR (McCallum 2001: 93). As stated before, due to the cultural importance of social and material relationships that influence a person's subjectivity, I expect this conceptualisation of 'material incorporation' to be rooted in the grammar of people's language in a manner that distinguishes it from other possessive forms. The fact that the PE in a *ti-N-ke* setting is inherently possessed and cannot be exchanged in any way - simply because it is not conceptualised as an external entity in the first place - supports this. Just as someone would never think about the possibility of exchanging their parents or a rock is not able to part with its holes, someone's *ëhke* cannot be detached from the person it belongs to because it represents a part of them. Due to the fact that within an animist ontology the material incorporation of an object through cultivation and rituals results in increased levels of possessive intimacy, I propose to elevate the status of possessive relationships of incorporated items to 'intimate possession', where the lexical item "opens positions or places for arguments", which means that someone who is a "'father' is always 'someone's father'" (Seiler 1983: 11). Just in the same way, an *ëhke* in Trio cannot exist without its referent and is always someone's *ëhke*. This leads me to the conclusion that the linguistically possessed entities in the *tï-N-ke* construction in Trio are governed by a PR-PE relationship of part-whole, rather than elements of control.
This proposed theory of 'material incorporation' raises two main questions:

- How should a construction which simply cannot be explained or described through Western concepts be positioned within Western classifications of POSSESSION?
- "How should relationships of 'material incorporation' be translated in Western documentation?"

Firstly, the inseparability of a PE and PR in the language of POSSESSION in English is generally expressed by the distinction between 'alienable possession' and 'inalienable possession'.

However, as explained in chapter 2.2, while I believe that the concept of ALIENABILITY in principle has merit and could serve as a valuable category for depicting such 'material extensions of self', the problem lies in the concept's deep Western cultural entrenchment which makes it unsuitable as long as notions of ALIENABILITY are seen as fixed parameters and do not include alternative ontological models of personhood and corporeality. An inclusive definition of ALIENABILITY would require an increase in the scope of what is inseparable from a person or their body on both a material and abstract level. Only once the subjectivity of a person is removed from a Thomist notion of inseparability can their body also be seen as a locus of change that is fabricated by both social relations and material influences. As a result, the classification of what is 'alienable' and 'inalienable' would become much more fluid and would allow for the incorporation of material objects into the category of inalienability, as seen in Trio. However, since this is currently not the case, I rather propose to depict forms of 'material incorporation', such as the *ti-N-ke* construction, as parthood relations, which could also be labelled 'mereological possession'.

In regard to my second question, I have tried to show here that 'generic translations', such as with the English multi-use verb 'have', will often do nothing but falsify the representation of indigenous concepts. In the example of the *Ti-N-ke* construction we can see that that its prototypical usage denotes intimate forms of possession of inherently possessed items, which either represent mereological constituents of a PE or consanguineous relations. As a result, the insertion of an 'established possessive item' into this construction will lead to pragmatically anomalous results, such as outlined in "Anna has a mother" in chapter 2.3. Equally, "I have a hammock (*ëhke*)" merely establishes an inherent connection and thus renders the expression almost semantically empty. To avoid the predicative 'have' construction, Carlin makes a very interesting suggestion, namely to translate the possessive relationship in (23) as 'being behammocked' (Carlin 2004: 464). Although an adjectivised noun such as *behammocked* might appear peculiar and impractical at first sight, I believe it has merit. As the English language apparently offers no suitable translation for this native concept, a form such as 'to be behammocked' works really well because it implies a more intimate possessive relationship than a predicative depiction with 'have'. This closeness is established through the noun's combination with a form of 'to be', which elevates the conceptual relation between a PR and their *weitapi* to a level of intimate possession and thus removes it from the realm of alienability. Therefore, I think this example also shows that once the boundaries of Western ontological understanding have been overstepped, it becomes necessary to find a lexical way to grant autonomy to foreign conceptualisations that are contained within people's native languages. This, again, brings me back to Holbraad, who points out that if we cannot describe certain foreign concepts then "there is something wrong with our ability to describe what others are saying, rather than with what they are actually saying, about which we *a fortiori* know nothing other than our own misunderstanding." (Holbraad 2010: 184).

As for the conceptualisation of this possessive construction, I propose to classify 'permanent possession' in Trio as 'intimate possession', focusing on the construction's characteristics of intimacy, rather than temporality. In this view, I regard lexical items included in the *Ti-N-ke* construction as intimately possessed items (part-whole and kinship relations), where an animist ontology can elevate possessed external entities to the status of mereological constituents.

To conclude this short chapter on possessive linguistic constructions in Trio, I want to point out that Seiler's distinction between 'established' and 'intimate' forms of possession appears to work very well outside its ontological framework. Admittedly, this does not come as a surprise to me, seeing that I regard these two categories as fundamental human domains. I strongly believe that a gradual system of intimacy will allow for a much more translatable cross-linguistic, cross-cultural and cross-ontological means of depicting possessive relationships because it conveys the idea that some relationships which are impersonal and external in one community can be internal and personal in others. Furthermore, I claim that on a purely

morphological level it is also possible to detect the Seilerian distinction between attributive and predicative possession, as outlined in chapter 2.3. What can be seen is that while the conceptual relations between the PRs and PEs in (23) and (24) above are determined by the PE's morphological affixes and thus need no further explanation, the nature of the possessive relationship in instances of 'temporary controlled possession' such as in (21) or (22) above has to be specified and predicated through the use of the lexeme *entu*. As a result, just as saying that someone is an *ëhke entu* (or in a Western equivalent: 'the owner of a mother'), it is equally pragmatically anomalous to ask someone *tï-weitapi-ke m-ana-∅-n*, simply because a *weitapi* cannot be inherently possessed.

5.2 TUPÍ-GUARANÍ (MIXED): KOKAMA-KOKAMILLA

In order to further substantiate my hypothesis of animist ontological footprints in Amerindian possessive linguistic constructions, I now want to briefly turn to a different Native Amazonian language, namely Kokama-Kokamilla (KK). KK is a language which is mainly spoken in Peru but can also be traced in neighbouring Brazil and Colombia. In Peru, KK is found in about 120 villages in the Peruvian Amazon, along the Huallaga, Marañon, Ucayali, Amazon, Nanay, and Itaya rivers (Vallejos Yopán 2010: 10). Although the language had long been classified as belonging to the Tupí-Guaraní family, recent studies suggest ranking it as a language with a mixed grammar as the product of a contact language situation. Nevertheless, the affiliation with Tupí-Guaraní morphology can be seen all across KK, "[w]hat languages (and families) contributed to the rest of the mix remains to be determined" (Vallejos Yopán 2010: v).

Looking at the language of POSSESSION in KK, it appears that there are two linguistic possessive constructions which are pervasive: an existential possessive construction and a construction featuring the lexeme *yara*, which is primarily glossed as 'owner'.

5.2.1. EXISTENTIAL CONSTRUCTION
The first type of lexical possession in KK is formed through the use of the lexeme *emete*, which can be roughly translated as 'to exist' (Vallejos Yopán 2010: 441). Besides its prototypical function, which is to express an entity's existence, it appears that constructions involving *emete* can also be used to indicate possessive relationships.

(26) juria=ka   emete   aruts
      Julia=LOC   exist   rice
      'There is rice at Julia' [Julia has rice] (Vallejos Yopán 2010: 452)

Similar to 'immediate possession' in Trio (chapter 5.1.1.), KK constructions involving *emete* in combination with a locative are translated as expressions of possession. However, it is important to note that just as in the Trio construction, POSSESSION is not expressed explicitly in (26) but simply inferred in its Western translation. Just as in the Trio example, I do not want to argue against an implication of a possessive affiliation between the PR and PE in (26); all I want to remark is that it is important to also account for the possibility of a non-possessive reading in such an instance. This ambiguity is erased in (27), where person, gender and number are marked on the possessor *ta*.

(27) ikia=ka   emete ta   irua=chasu
      here=LOC   exist 1SG.M   mate=AFF
      'Here (in this village) I have my partner'
      (Lit. My partner is in this village) (Vallejos Yopán 2010: 451)

Just as in 5.1.1, I want to draw attention to the fact that the translation of this possessive construction in KK with the English verb 'have' does not come without problems. What such a translation of this construction does not convey is the idea that its basic expression is EXISTENCE. Instead, what a 'have' translation does here is to impose the concept of Western

POSSESSION and OWNERSHIP on the native expression. The jump from [EXISTENCE OF ITEM AT/BY SOMEONE] to [CONTROL OF ITEM] might be a common practise in English speaking communities, but it cannot be presupposed outside Western societies. In order to prevent such hasty conclusions which can falsely label indigenous people as 'owners' or 'possessors', I again campaign for a translation that allows for a non-normative reading of the construction, detached from ethnocentric interpretations. Also, due to the fact that the prototypical expression of *emete* appears to be EXISTENCE (a very foundational human domain), it is only expectable that this KK construction will exhibit a wide range of entities that can be included in it. Once the semantic foundation of EXISTENCE is replaced with Western OWNERSHIP, the result would mean that all included entities can be 'owned' or 'controlled', which would constitute an enormous insinuation. For this very reason it is so important to disconnect a lexeme such as *emete* from notions of OWNERSHIP and portray it in a non-normative setting.

5.2.2. *YARA* CONSTRUCTION

Besides the 'existential verb' *emete*, affiliation in KK can also be expressed through the lexeme *yara*, which is translated into English as 'owner' (Vallejos Yopán 2010). In accordance to my previous methodology, I first want to conduct a brief distributional analysis to determine the semantic make-up of the native lexeme and contrast it with its alleged English counterpart.

What becomes immediately apparent when considering (28)-(31) below is that *yara* can be found in a wide variety of possessive relationships in KK. While the translations of (28) and (29) would correspond to the Western concept of OWNERSHIP, namely control or domination over material entities such as 'houses' or 'canoes', (30) and (31) clearly illustrate that the meaning of *yara* must exceed simple forms of OWNERSHIP. Just as Julia does not simply control or own her husband in (30), the PR in (31) could not be considered 'the owner of guilt' in English. This view is supported by the fact that further entities which occur in combination with the lexeme *yara* are immaterial entities (e.g. 'stories', 'sadness'), body parts (e.g. 'spine') and even persons of kin, (e.g. 'son', 'daughter') (Vallejos Yopán 2010).

(28)   ikian   uka-yara=tsuriay
        this   house-owner=PAS3
        'This was the house owner' (Vallejos Yopán 2010: 391)

(29)   mijiri   ɨara-yara
        Miguel   canoe-owner
        'Miguel is the owner of a canoe'
        (Lit. Miguel is canoe-owner") (Vallejos Yopán 2010: 431)

(30)   juria   mena-yara=uy
        Julia   husband-owner=PAS1
        'Julia has got a husband' (Vallejos Yopán 2010: 433)

(31)   ene   ucha-yara[7]
        2SG.L   guilt-HAVE[7]
        'You have guilt/it's your fault' (Vallejos Yopán 2010: 393)

Due to the fact that (30) and (31) involve entities which cannot occur in a setting or OWNERSHIP in English, the translations are switched to 'have' constructions. This practise can be commonly seen in translations of foreign possessive constructions, namely that the English label 'owner' is used to translate a native lexeme for as long as it is convenient. However, as soon as its usage would violate English grammar rules, 'owner' is replaced by the multi-use verb

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[7] Here, I want to point out that in her Grammar on KK, Vallejos Yopán uses inconsistent glossing. Besides the translation as 'owner', she lists *yara* as a verbalizer and provides the alternative translation [to make X] and [to have X]. Since I do not agree with these interpretations I will not consider them in my analysis.

'have', which basically allows for the inclusion of every possessive entity. While this methodology might be convenient, it only helps to distort native concepts and classify them under vague Western umbrella categories. The only solution to avoid such a scenario is to first create a clear semantic map of an indigenous concept and then either find a suitable equivalent or grant it authority.

Once thing I find particularly interesting is that the semantic map of *yara* appears to stretch over all different levels of possessive intimacy. Unlike in Trio, where it is to some extent possible to deduce the intimacy of a relationship or its duration from the grammatical construction it inhabits, this construction in KK can express the relationship between a person and their father, their knife or their happiness. As outlined before, the English language offers a verb that fulfils a very similar semantic function, namely 'have'. However, I want to stress that I do not believe that the wide semantic range shared by *yara* and 'have' should lead to the drawing of a connection between the two terms, as glossed in (31). In chapter 2.4 I illustrated Givón's theory on the historical development of 'have', where the conceptualisation of 'being the owner of' over time led to the notion of 'having ownership', which, subsequently resulted in the semantically bleached verb 'have' (Givón 2001: 134). With this historical semantic progression in mind, it should become clear why a semantically bleached form of 'having ownership' can and should not be paired with a native Amerindian concept which goes beyond mere elements of control.

This semantic incongruence between the native linguistic concept and its translation shows that just as *entu* in Trio, the semantic map of *yara* must differ significantly from inherently Western possessive concepts. As in the Trio analysis, the usage of *yara* suggests that instead of monodirectionality, the nature of the conceptual relation between a PR and PE in this construction must be characterised by a certain level of reciprocity. This, in turn, leads me to position *yara* closer to MASTERY than to OWNERSHIP. This interpretation would correspond to Fausto (2008), where the author discusses different lexical occurrences of forms of MASTERY throughout Amerindian languages and states that cognates of *jar, which have been well-known among Tupi-Guarani peoples since the 16th century, can be connected to the 'owner-master' category (Fausto 2008). Although interpreting it differently, Vallejos Yopán confirms this connection, saying that "[a]s for the origin of this morpheme, clearly, the source of this morpheme is the Tupinamba form *jár-a 'owner'" (Jensen 1998:507; Vallejos Yopán 2010: 392). I want to add that even though I connect *yara* to the notion of MASTERY, it should be noted that within the classification of 'master-controller' or 'owner-master', many different semantic singularities should be expected across Amazonian language families. This can be seen when comparing the semantic maps of *yara* and *entu.* Although the two constructions share similar notions of reciprocity and care, they diverge strongly in the nature of entities that can be included in 'MASTERY constructions' and/or the level of intimacy that is expressed by them. However, despite these differences I still think it is important to classify both terms under the same concept, since it helps to grant recognition to their underlying ontological foundation and separates it from mere forms of monodirectional control. Therefore, just as with *entu* in Trio, I think that once the lexeme *yara* is disconnected from inherently Western possessive concepts, it is vital to analyse its fine-grained meaning within its native ontological environment in order to accurately conceptualise this possessive relationship in KK.

6. CONCLUSION

Throughout this work I have tried to follow a logical and clear route of progression, which is what I now want to outline once more. When comparing linguistic forms of possession across languages, the first central issue has to be the establishment of a cross-culturally applicable definition of the domain of POSSESSION. This task has shown that the definition of the English noun 'possession' is far from-clear cut. What my analysis has illustrated in this respect is that in a culture dominated by capitalism and concomitant materialism, it appears that the concept of OWNERSHIP, a sub-category of POSSESSION which involves elements of exclusivity, domination and control, is gradually invading the semantic space of its non-normative 'mother node'. As a result, the dominance of OWNERSHIP has created a distortion of the semantic foundation of the domain of POSSESSION in English, which also caused strong discrepancies among the linguistic scientific community. In order to bring the debate back to its lowest common denominator, I thus set out to redefine POSSESSION through disconnecting LINGUISTIC POSSESSION from CONCEPTUAL POSSESSION. Only after the conceptual foundation for this basic human domain is defined, is it possible to document foreign possessive relationships without judging them along inherently Western parameters. In this respect, it is crucial that not only cultural but also profound ontological differences among people need to be accounted for when exploring foreign concepts. It is these ontological differences between groups of people that require researchers to first acknowledge and define their own ontological foundation before they can open their minds to foreign modes of thinking and understanding the world. After outlining both Amerindian animism and Western naturalism, I provided concrete examples in which they can have a direct effect on the domain of CONCEPTUAL POSSESSION, in the form of alterations to the concept of PERSONHOOD and the nature of the conceptual relation between a PR and a PE. Since language is our human tool to express such mental concepts, ontological influences of animism must consequently be reflected in linguistic representations of native Amerindian languages. An analysis of two indigenous Amerindian languages from different language families proved this hypothesis, where both ontological changes to the personhood of possessive entities and the actual nature of the relationship could be substantiated. On the level of personhood, the influence of animism demonstrated that the social fabrication of subjectivity and self allows for concrete material influences to be incorporated and elevated to an internal personal level, which strongly diverges from the Western idea of the indivisible and complete self. As for the conceptual relationship between a PR and PE, the non-hierarchical conceptualisation of animate beings within an animist world opens up the possibility for reciprocal possessive relations, where control and domination cannot be achieved without forms of protection and care in return. In order to accurately document and portray such linguistic manifestations of indigenous concepts, I proposed the idea of granting them autonomy and to 'conceptualise, rather than analyse'. Only once imposed Western classifications are removed from foreign language data will it be possible to put an end to debates such as "how much 'ownership' exists in native Amazonian societies?", when it should be clear that OWNERSHIP is nothing but an inherently Western conceptual construction that is being exported around the world.

Lastly, I want to add that during the work on this thesis I have come to understand that my general claim of the paper has been transformed to a certain extent. While my initial goal was merely to prove the existence of concrete influences of animism on lexical constructions, the issue of considering ontological influences in the domain of POSSESSION has gradually made way for a more profound appeal, namely to re-evaluate the general methodology of conducting ethnographic linguistic documentation. The analysis of the field of POSSESSION in this work merely unveiled instantiations of the interplay between linguistics and ontology; however, I expect ontological influences on language to be much more widespread and pervasive throughout all levels of language. It is a fact that much of contemporary foreign language documentation is still based on top-down approaches which promote the superiority of Western

thinking. In such, native concepts are merely fitted in Western grammatical moulds so we can make sense of them, without having to readjust our own ontological parameters and open our minds to new conceptualisations of the world. I strongly believe that through promoting a 'right' and a 'wrong' thinking, Western science often deprives itself of enriching its own understanding, while falsely reinforcing the Western world as the epicentre of human evolution. Rather, what is needed is a reversal of the conventional relationship between analytical concepts and ethnographic data, allowing the latter to transform the former where necessary (Holbraad in Carrither 2010). Once again, I want to emphasise that in order to reach this goal, a large-scale paradigm shift within the field of anthropological language documentation will be required. The central aim in this respect has to be to grant autonomy to indigenous concepts and revisit existing foreign linguistic data so as to disconnect it from inherently Western grammatical categorisations. Since a concrete model of such a complex paradigm shift is beyond the scope of this thesis, I hope that the issues raised in this work will stimulate future debates and lead to an 'ontological decolonisation' in the field.

Personally, studying possessive linguistic constructions from indigenous languages not only broadened my horizon to new ways of conceptualising possessive relationships but most importantly, it made me reconsider Western notions of POSSESSION which had been disguised as 'inherent' or 'natural'. I truly hope that this analysis has shown that once 'foreign knowledge' is acknowledged and autonomy is granted to non-Western concepts and ideas, us Westerners can learn much from other people and thus increase our own understanding of humanness.

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