

## Inverse-locational predication in typological perspective

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The central topic of the present paper is the typology of inverse-locational predication, illustrated by English *There is a cat in the tree*. After defining inverse-locational predication as a comparative concept and discussing its relationship with other types of constructions commonly called ‘existential’, I propose a morphosyntactic typology of inverse-locational predication constructions, and I discuss the alignment relationships that can be found in the languages of the world between plain-locational, inverse-locational, and possessive predication.

KEYWORDS: existential constructions, locational predication, possessive predication.

### 1. Introduction

The central topic of the present paper is the morphosyntactic typology of INVERSE-LOCATIONAL PREDICATION (ILP), illustrated by English *There is a cat in the tree*, as opposed to PLAIN-LOCATIONAL PREDICATION (PLP), illustrated by *The cat is in the tree*. Prototypical instances of plain and inverse locational predication equally encode episodic spatial relationships involving two concrete entities: a figure that has the ability to move, and a ground occupying a fixed position in space (or at least less mobile than the figure, as in *There is a book on the table* / *The book is on the table*: books are easier to move around than tables). The difference lies in the perspectivization of the relationship: from figure to ground in plain-locational predication, from ground to figure in inverse-locational predication.

Inverse-locational clauses such as English *There is a cat in the tree* are commonly designated as ‘existential’. However, if ‘exist(ence)’ is taken with its usual meaning ‘be(ing) an element of the world’, it should be clear that *There is a cat in the tree* does not express existence, since in languages having a verb such as English *exist* or French *exister*, it is impossible to use it to express the same meaning, and conversely, in many languages, clauses expressing pure existence without any reference being made to location, such as *God exists* / *Dieu existe*, cannot be paraphrased by means of the inverse-locational predicator. Things are even clearer with negative clauses: a clause such as *There is no cat in the tree* quite obviously does not deny the existence of cats, and the label ‘negative existential’ commonly attached to such clauses is particularly misleading.

The semantic relationship between existence (in the usual sense of ‘being an element of the world’) and location follows from the fact that, for concrete entities (but only for concrete entities!), *X is an element of the world* is equivalent to *X can be found somewhere in the world*. Given that languages have a marked tendency to express relatively abstract meanings by extending the use of words or constructions with a relatively concrete initial meaning, it is not surprising that many languages have variously developed co-expression patterns conflating concrete spatial relationships and pure existence. For example, Latin did not have distinct PLP and ILP constructions, and the verb *esse* used for locational and equative predication also had a monovalent use in which it expressed pure existence, as in *Deus est* or *Cogito ergo sum*. Given the importance of Latin in the history of linguistics, one may suspect that this particularity of Latin bears some responsibility for the widespread use of ‘existential’

as a cover term for verbs or constructions that are not necessarily available to express pure existence but can be found as the translation equivalent of Latin *esse* in some of its other uses.

There are also authors who variously restrict the extension of ‘existential’. Many of them restrict ‘existential’ to clauses in which no location is expressed, such as *There are several cat breeds*, and use ‘locative existential’ for clauses that specify location. Czinglar (2002), further distinguishes ‘locative existentials’ expressing accidental and temporary (‘stage-level’) presence (*There is a book on the table*) from ‘pure existentials’ expressing a habitual (or ‘individual-level’) figure-ground relationship (*There are many books in this library*). In Koch’s (2012) terminology, ‘generic existence’ (excluding the specification of a location) is distinguished from ‘bounded existence’, illustrated by *There are many lions in Africa*, and inverse-locational clauses such as *There is a cat in the tree* are not characterized as expressing existence, but ‘rhematic location’.

The variation in the range of uses of the constructions that can provide equivalents of English sentences such as *There is a cat in the tree* is an obvious source of difficulty in designing a non-ambiguous terminology. As observed by Koch (2012), some languages have a systematic distinction between the construction used for prototypical inverse-locational clauses as defined above, and another construction expressing long-term presence (as German *da ist* vs *es gibt*),<sup>1</sup> whereas in others (English, French and others), the construction used for prototypical inverse-locational predication is also widely used for long-term presence, cf. *There is a cat in the tree* / *There are lions in Africa*. It is important, therefore, to clearly delimit the constructions investigated in this paper in terms adapted to a broad typological perspective. Section 2 is devoted to this topic.

In section 3, after a sketch of the typology of locational predication and predicative possession, I propose a typology of the constructions found in prototypical inverse-locational clauses in the languages of the world. The types are identified in terms of alignment with other functional types of predication.

Section 4 discusses the alignment relationships between plain-locational, inverse-locational, and possessive predications. Numerous studies have tackled this question, but most of them speculate on the basis of data from a very small number of languages among the most-studied, without really considering the possible cross-linguistic variation. Even the few authors that have made serious attempts to develop a cross-linguistic approach to ‘existential’ constructions, such as Clark (1978) and Koch (2012), have used language samples including at most a few tens of languages in which some areas only are well represented.

The present article is based on data from more than 700 languages from all parts of the world. In addition to data on individual languages that I collected or checked myself, or were kindly provided to me by language experts, I have used not only reference grammars or articles providing information about the ILP constructions of individual languages, but also the data provided by four regional language samples: Creissels’ (2019a) sample of 116 languages of the Sudanic belt, Chappell & Creissels’ (2019) sample of 71 south east Asian languages,<sup>2</sup> Devos *et al.*’s (2019) sample of 100 Bantu languages, and Michaelis *et al.*’s (2013) sample of 75 Pidgin and Creole varieties. These 700 or so languages do not constitute

<sup>1</sup> On the restrictions on the use of German *es gibt*, often (but erroneously) described as an equivalent of English *there is* or French *il y a*, see Czinglar (2002).

<sup>2</sup> When writing the final version of this article, I had access to another database for south east Asian languages, compiled by Hilary Chappell and Lü Shanshan (Chappell & Lü *to appear*), which was decisive for the analysis of a pattern I previously considered exceptional, in which the same verb can be used as a transitive verb of possession (‘have’) and as a locational copula (‘be’).

a language sample in the technical sense of this term, since many of the sources provide only very partial and sometimes ambiguous data about ILP and related constructions. The practice of systematically including a section dealing specifically with ‘existential’ constructions is relatively recent in grammar writing, and even in the grammars including such a section, a frequent problem is the lack of examples of prototypical inverse-locational clauses. Nevertheless, the data provided by the majority of the sources are sufficient to at least decide whether the language has an ILP construction or not, and if so, to which type it belongs. Consequently, the data I have gathered can be expected to give a good picture of the cross-linguistic diversity in the possible types of ILP constructions, but not necessarily of the exact distribution of all the features that are worth being considered in the typology of ILP constructions.

## 2. Inverse-locational predication and related notions

### 2.1. Inverse-locational predication as a comparative concept

There would be no sense in trying to typologize constructions identified cross-linguistically as ‘existential constructions’ or ‘ILP constructions’ on the sole basis of a rough translational equivalence with some English (or French, Russian, German, etc.) construction, because the predicative constructions that can be found cross-linguistically in the translational equivalents of the English construction *There is N (Loc)* may differ greatly in some details of their use. For example, all accounts of the English construction *There is N (Loc)* insist on the strong definiteness restrictions that characterize it and suggest considering such restrictions as an essential characteristic of ‘existential predication’, but in many other languages these restrictions are inexistent, or at least much weaker. In colloquial French, *Tiens, (il) y a Jean!* (lit. ‘Hey, there is Jean!’) is perfect in a situation in which the speaker becomes aware of the presence of a person (s)he knows under the name of Jean among other persons. Similarly, Leonetti (2008) contrasts the acceptability of the Catalan sentence in (1) with the unacceptability of its literal equivalents in English (*\*There is the police in the courtyard*) or Spanish (*\*Hay la policía en el patio*).

(1) Catalan (Leonetti 2008)

*Hi ha la policia al pati.*  
 there<sub>expl</sub> has the police in\_the courtyard

As observed by Leonetti, the fact that Spanish is particularly restrictive in the use of the inverse-locational verb *haber* can be related to the possibility of using the locational verb *estar* not only in topic-comment clauses with the subject NP preceding the locational verb, as in (2a), but also inthetic clauses with a definite subject in post-verbal position, as in (2b).

(2) Spanish (pers.knowl. & Leonetti 2008)

a. *Juan está al teléfono.*  
 Juan is at\_the phone  
 ‘Juan is at the phone.’

- b. *Está Juan al teléfono.*  
       is Juan at\_the phone  
       ‘There is Juan at the phone.’

Hausa (Afroasiatic, Chadic) illustrates the opposite situation, with an inverse-locational predicator *àkwai* that freely combines with personal pronouns, as in (3).

- (3) Hausa (Afroasiatic, Chadic; Newman 2000: 178)  
       *Àkwai mù cikin màganaĩ.*  
       ILP 1PL in matter.D  
       lit. ‘There is us in the matter.’ → ‘We are involved in the matter.’

Consequently, the cross-linguistic identification of the constructions whose typology is the central topic of the present article can only rely on comparative concepts in the sense of Haspelmath (2010).

PLAIN-LOCATIONAL PREDICATION (Koch’s ‘thematic location’), illustrated by English *The book is on the table*, French *Le livre est sur la table*, or German *Das Buch ist/liegt auf dem Tisch*, is identified as such cross-linguistically by its ability to encode prototypical figure-ground relationships with the unmarked perspectivization ‘figure>ground’.<sup>3</sup> By ‘prototypical figure-ground relationship’, I mean an EPISODIC spatial relationship between two concrete entities differing in their degree of MOBILITY: the ground typically occupies a fixed position in space, whereas the figure is mobile, which regardless of information structure gives it a higher degree of saliency, hence the unmarked nature of the ‘figure>ground’ perspectivization.

INVERSE-LOCATIONAL PREDICATION (Koch’s ‘rhematic location’) is identified as such by its ability to encode the same prototypical figure-ground relationships, but with the marked perspectivization ‘ground>figure’: English *There is a book (on the table)*, French *Il y a un livre (sur la table)*, German *Da ist/liegt ein Buch (auf dem Tisch)*, etc.

In order to qualify as a representative instance of the comparative concept ‘ILP construction’ in the typology developed in section 3, a predicative construction must fulfill the following three conditions:

- (a) it must be available to encode spatial relationships involving prototypical figures and grounds;
- (b) it must be typically used in communicative settings where the relevant information is the presence of an entity at some place and its identification;
- (c) it must not be analyzable as deriving from a general-locational predication construction via the application of some morphosyntactic device generally applicable to predicative constructions (such as variation in constituent order, topic/focus marking, or definiteness marking).

<sup>3</sup> The term *pivot* is commonly used for the argument in inverse-locational clauses designated here as *figure*. The reason why I do not retain this use of the term *pivot* is that it is fully justified for the description of constructions such as *There is a woman knocking at the door*, in which an argument is shared by two predicates, but not for the description of unambiguously monopredicative constructions such as those considered in this article.

This means for example that, in Spanish, the construction illustrated in (4b) qualifies as a representative instance of the comparative concept ‘inverse-locational predication’, given the contrast with (4a).

(4) Spanish (pers.knowl.)

- a. *El gato está en el árbol.*  
     the cat is in the tree  
     ‘The cat is in the tree.’
- b. *Hay un gato en el árbol.*  
     there\_is a cat in the tree  
     ‘There is a cat in the tree.’

By contrast, the construction of a clause such as (2b) above cannot be analyzed as instantiating an ILP construction, in spite of the fact that the construction found in its equivalents in other languages such as Catalan or French can be analyzed as an ILP construction according to the definitions used in the present article. The point is that, in Spanish, the change in the perspectivization of the figure-ground relationship in (2a-b) is only suggested by a variation in constituent order whose possibility constitutes in Spanish a general property of intransitive predications (on this point, see also section 2.4 below).

Conceiving ILP as a comparative concept means that the predicative constructions of individual languages designated as ILP constructions share the ability to encode a particular semantic type of predication, but must not be expected to have the same range of uses and to be subject to the same restrictions. In particular, as already mentioned above, there is cross-linguistic variation in the possibility of using them with definite NP’s in figure role, or with reference to long-term presence (Koch’s ‘bounded existence’, as in *There are many lions in Africa*, paraphrasable as ‘Africa is a place where many lions spend their lives’). What they share is only their possible involvement in contrasting pairs of sentences referring to prototypical figure-ground relationships such as *The cat is in the tree* / *There is a cat in the tree*, regardless of possible cross-linguistic variation in other aspects of their use.

## 2.2. Inverse-locational predication and ‘definiteness effects’

A number of studies have addressed the question of definiteness effects in ILP constructions, see among others Abbott (1992, 1993), Bentley (2011, 2017), Bentley & Ciconte (2016), Bentley & Cruschina (2016), Coy (2016), Cruschina (2016), Varley (2016), Villalba (2016), Wagner Nagy (2016).

There is quite obviously important cross-linguistic variation in the compatibility of ILP constructions with definite NPs. What I consider crucial is that the ban on ILP constructions with definite NPs in figure role is never absolute. Even in English, a language with strong restrictions in this respect, examples of ILP constructions that do not exhibit the definiteness effect can be found, which implies that syntactic ill-formedness of ILP clauses with definite NPs in figure role is not a possible explanation:

(5) English (Abbott 1993)

- A: *Is there anything to eat?*  
 B: *There is the leftover chicken from last night.*

However, the precise nature of the semantic or pragmatic factors responsible for the restrictions on the use of definite NPs in the role of ground in ILP constructions is still unclear to a considerable extent. Mirativity may play a role, as well as presuppositions about the expected presence of a given type of entities in the situation to which the inverse-locational clause refers. The notion of ‘contextualized existentials’ often mentioned in this connection (Abbott 1992, 1993), rather than clarifying the debate, contributes to obscure it, since it is clear that uses of ILP constructions with definite NPs in figure role have nothing to do with existence in the narrow sense of this term, but rather with presence at some place. However, I will not discuss this question further, since I have nothing to add to the already extensive discussion about the cross-linguistic variation in the acceptability of definite NPs in the constructions that meet my definition of ILP constructions. In the perspective of the present article, what matters actually is only to be as precise as possible about the criteria on the basis of which clauses can be recognized as representative instances of the comparative concept ‘ILP construction’.

### 2.3. Inverse-locational predication and existence

In the literature, ILP constructions are commonly viewed as a particular type of ‘existential constructions’, and existential constructions are defined, without any further comment, as expressing existence. However, as already discussed in the introduction, if ‘existence’ is taken with its usual meaning of ‘being an element of the world’, ILP constructions cannot be viewed as expressing existence, since in contrasting pairs criterial for identifying ILP constructions, such as *The cat is in the tree* / *There is a cat (in the tree)*, the inverse-locational (or ‘existential’) variant cannot be paraphrased by means of verbs such as English *exist*. Consequently, there is a need to clarify the relationship between the particular type of ‘existential’ construction that I designate as inverse-locational predication and the notion of existence as defined in dictionaries of English or other languages and discussed by philosophers.

There is an obvious semantic relationship between existence in the usual sense of this term and location, but this relationship is conditioned by the nature of the entities to which these notions are applied. For concrete entities, it may be argued that the notion of pure existence can be dispensed with, since *X is an element of the world* is equivalent to *X is located somewhere in the world*, but this equivalence cannot be extended to abstract entities, and this is confirmed by the observation of the distribution of the constructions available for the expression of pure existence and inverse-locational predication in individual languages.

For example, in French, as discussed by Méry (2005), the uses of the inverse-locational predicator *il y a* (lit. ‘it<sub>expl</sub> there<sub>expl</sub> has’) overlap in a complex way with those of *il existe* (lit. ‘it<sub>expl</sub> exists’) and *il est* (lit. ‘it<sub>expl</sub> is’). *Il y a plusieurs façons de faire ça* ‘There are various ways to do this’ can be freely paraphrased as *Il existe plusieurs façons de faire ça*, and *Il est des situations dans lesquelles personne n’aimerait se trouver* is a fully acceptable paraphrase of *Il y a des situations dans lesquelles personne n’aimerait se trouver* ‘There are situations in which nobody would like to be involved’. However, there are also situations with reference to which these constructions are not interchangeable. Crucially, *Il existe N (Loc)* and *Il est N (Loc)* cannot be used to describe prototypical figure-ground relationships. For example, formulations such as *\*Il existe un chat dans l’arbre* or *\*Il est un chat dans l’arbre* are completely ruled out. Conversely, it is not difficult to imagine contexts in which a formulation

such as *Heureusement qu'il y a Dieu* 'Fortunately, there is God' is fully adequate, but *\*Il y a Dieu* lit. 'There is God' is not acceptable in French as the mere statement of God's existence.

There is a huge literature on 'existential' predication, but most authors do not formulate any definition, or simply reproduce or paraphrase Jespersen's definition of an existential clause as one in which "the existence of something is asserted or denied" (Jespersen 1924: 155). Among the linguists who have quoted Jespersen's definition in a discussion of ILP constructions, very few seem to have been aware that a strict application of this definition excludes ILP constructions altogether from the set of 'existential' constructions. This holds in particular for Lyons' (1967) article, which has been particularly influential in the subsequent development of studies investigating the relationship between plain-locational, inverse-locational and possessive clauses, but in which inverse-locational clauses are simply designated as 'existential', and the three sentence types are just introduced by English examples.

MacNally (2011: 1830) adds two interesting details: "The term 'existential sentence' is used to refer to a SPECIALIZED OR NON-CANONICAL CONSTRUCTION which expresses a proposition about the existence OR THE PRESENCE of someone or something" (emphasis mine). However, she does not comment on why she included 'presence' in her definition, and the remainder of the paper shows that she does not really depart from the common view according to which existence as defined in dictionaries (and discussed by philosophers) provides an adequate characterization of the meaning expressed by so-called existential constructions, including ILP constructions.

At this point, a crucial observation is that, in some languages, no special context is required to validate the use of negative ILP clauses such as those in (6), which quite obviously do not deny existence.<sup>4</sup>

(6) French (pers.knowl.) / Russian (Partee & Borschev 2007)

- a. *Il n' y avait pas Jean au cours.*  
it<sub>expl</sub> not there<sub>expl</sub> had not Jean at<sub>the</sub> lecture  
'Jean was not at the lecture.'
- b. *Ivana ne bylo na lekcii.*  
Ivan.GEN NEG be.PST.SG.N at lecture.PREP  
'Ivan was not at the lecture.'

To summarize, the use of verbs such as English *exist* or French *exister* overlaps with that of ILP constructions, but the situations for which 'exist' verbs provide possible paraphrases of ILP constructions are not those that identify the constructions in question as ILP constructions. English *exist* and French *exister* have an etymological link with the expression of presence at location, since they come from Latin *existere/exsistere* 'to step out, stand forth, emerge, appear', but their meaning has evolved in such a way that their use with reference to prototypical figure-ground relationships is now completely ruled out.

In this connection, it is interesting to observe that Mandinka (Mande) does not have a verbal lexeme equivalent to English *exist*, but does have a construction expressing pure existence, illustrated in (7a-b), and this existential construction is not available to encode

<sup>4</sup> Due to the restrictions on the use of the ILP construction in English, the English translation of these examples cannot reflect the nuance that distinguishes them from the corresponding plain-locational sentences (French *Jean n'était pas au cours*, Russian *Ivan ne byl na lekcii*).

prototypical figure-ground relationships, as shown by the impossibility of (7c). In the existential construction, the predicate function is fulfilled by the resultative form of the verb *ké*, a polysemous verb used transitively with meanings such as ‘do’, ‘transform’, or ‘put’, and intransitively with meanings such as ‘occur’ or ‘become’.

(7) Mandinka (pers.doc.)<sup>5</sup>

- a. *Kòlòŋ-kònò-tótò mán à lôŋ kó fàŋkáasòò bé kée-ríŋ.*  
 well-in-frog.D CPL.NEG 3SG know QUOT ocean.D LCOP occur-RES  
 ‘The frog that lives in the well does not know that the ocean exists.’ (proverb)
- b. *Mòò-siifáa jámáa lè bé kée-ríŋ.*  
 person-kind many FOC LCOP occur-RES  
 ‘There exist many kinds of people.’
- c. *\*Nàŋkúmòò bé kée-ríŋ yíróò tó.*  
 cat.D LCOP occur-RES tree.D LOC  
 Intended: ‘There is a cat in the tree.’

More generally, three distinct constructions can be used in Mandinka to express pure existence, which however differ in the other details of their distribution. In example (8):

- (8a) illustrates the construction with the resultative form of *ké* ‘occur’, already illustrated in (7), which in addition to pure existence can only be used to express occurrence of an event or presence of diffuse entities such as ‘darkness’ or ‘cold’;
- (8b) illustrates a construction with the transitive verb *sòtó* ‘get, have’ used intransitively; this construction can express pure existence, but its most typical use is the expression of the presence of some entity at a place where the entity in question can be expected to be found; for example, it is commonly used to ask a shopkeeper about the availability of some product; like the construction illustrated in (8a), it cannot be used in clauses corresponding to English *There is a cat in the tree*.
- (8c) is formally a locational clause in which the figure phrase is focalized, and the role of ground is fulfilled by *jěe*, a place adverb normally interpreted as referring to a specific place distinct from the deictic center (as in *Fàatú bé jěe* ‘Fatou is there’), but used here as a mere place filler with no specific reference.

(8) Mandinka (pers.doc.)

- a. *Ñòò-siifáa fúlá lè bé kée-ríŋ.*  
 millet-variety two FOC LCOP occur-RES  
 ‘There are two varieties of millet.’
- b. *Ñòò-siifáa fúlá lè sòtó-tà.*  
 millet-variety two FOC have-CPL  
 ‘There are two varieties of millet.’
- c. *Ñòò-siifáa fúlá lè bé jěe.*  
 millet-variety two FOC LCOP there  
 ‘There are two varieties of millet.’

<sup>5</sup> The abbreviation ‘pers.doc.’ (personal documentation) refers to data I collected myself on poorly documented or undocumented languages on which I carried out fieldwork, or to data constructed according to the indications given by grammars and subsequently checked with the help of native speakers.



The fact that a concrete entity can be said to exist if and only if it can be found somewhere provides a plausible explanation of the fact that, in many languages, the constructions that meet the definition of ILP constructions can also be used to express pure existence. However, the notion of pure existence is not restricted to locatable entities, and languages may also have ILP constructions that are not available for the expression of pure existence, and existential constructions (in the narrow sense of constructions typically used for the expression of pure existence, in particular with reference to non-locatable entities) that cannot be used to encode the episodic presence of a concrete entity at some place.

#### 2.4. Inverse-locational predication, information structure and perspectivization

The terms of ‘thematic’ vs ‘rhematic location’ used by Koch (2012) suggest that the distinction between plain-locational and inverse-locational predication directly reflects a difference in the information structure status of the figure and the ground. However, the relationship between information structure and the choice between PLP and ILP constructions is much less direct and straightforward than suggested by these terms, and this is the reason why I decided not to retain them in the present article.

An important shortcoming of Koch’s terminology is that it masks an important asymmetry between the information structure properties of PLP and ILP constructions, in the languages that have distinct PLP and ILP constructions according to the criteria formulated in section 2.1.

For example, in French, as shown in (9), plain-locational clauses can be manipulated in the same way as ordinary verbal clauses to express variations in information structure.

#### (9) French (pers.knowl.)

- a. *Le chat est dans l’arbre.*  
the cat is in the tree  
‘The cat is in the tree.’
- b. *Le chat, il est dans l’arbre.*  
the cat it is in the tree  
lit. ‘The cat, it is in the tree.’ (topicalization of the figure)
- c. *C’est le chat qui est dans l’arbre.*  
it is the cat which is in the tree  
lit. ‘It is the cat which is in the tree.’ (focalization of the figure)
- d. *L’arbre, le chat y est souvent.*  
the tree the cat there is often  
lit. ‘The tree, the cat is often there.’ (topicalization of the ground)
- e. *Le chat, c’est dans l’arbre qu’il est.*  
the cat it is in the tree that it est  
lit. ‘The cat, it is in the tree that it is.’ (focalization of the ground)

By contrast, there are some limitations in the possibilities of manipulating clauses whose nucleus is the inverse locational predicator *il y a* ‘there is’ (literally ‘it there has’). As shown in (10b-d), in the ILP construction, the ground NP can be freely topicalized or focalized, and the figure NP can be focalized, at least in rectification contexts. By contrast, as shown in

(10e), definite NPs in figure role cannot be left-dislocated and resumed by a clitic pronoun to express topicalization.

(10) French (pers.knowl.)

- a. *Il y avait Marie à la réunion.*  
it there had Marie at the meeting  
lit. 'There was Mary at the meeting.'
- b. *A la réunion, il y avait Marie.*  
at the meeting it there had Marie  
lit. 'At the meeting, there was Mary.' (topicalization of the ground)
- c. *C'est à la réunion qu'il y avait Marie.*  
it is at the meeting that it there had Marie  
lit. 'It is at the meeting that there was Mary.' (focalization of the ground)
- d. *C'est Marie qu'il y avait à la réunion.*  
it is Marie that it there had at the meeting  
lit. 'It is Mary that there was at the meeting.' (focalization of the figure)
- e. *\*Marie, il l'y avait à la réunion.*  
Marie it her there was at the meeting  
(impossibility of topicalizing a definite NP in figure role by means  
of the topicalizing construction normally available for definite NPs)

As shown in (11), in the ILP construction of French, it is possible to topicalize the nucleus of NPs including a modifier that specifies quantity, but this is a different operation.

(11) French (pers.knowl.)

- a. *Il y avait plusieurs femmes à la réunion.*  
it there had several women at the meeting  
'There were several women at the meeting.'
- b. *Des femmes, il y en avait plusieurs à la réunion.*  
of.the women it there of\_them had several at the meeting  
lit. 'Women, there were several of them at the meeting.'

Such observations confirm the widely accepted view that, in inverse-locational clauses, as opposed to plain-locational clauses, the figure is obligatorily rhematic. However, this is not enough to allow for a straightforward characterization of PLP and ILP in terms of their information structure properties, since plain locational predication shows no special property in this respect, which incidentally makes quite misleading the term 'thematic location' used by Koch for what I call plain-locational predication. A reasonable hypothesis is that the information structure properties of ILP are rather a consequence of some deeper semantic property.

An alternative approach to the analysis of the contrast between plain-locational and inverse-locational predication as determined by the information status of the figure and the ground has been proposed by Barbara Partee and Vladimir Borschev in a series of articles in which they argue that the contrast between PLP and ILP is only indirectly related to information structure, and basically reflects the 'perspectivization' of figure-ground relationships. In Partee & Borschev (2004, 2007), Borschev & Partee (2002), they develop the

idea that a notion of ‘Perspectival Structure’ distinct from (and more basic than) the Theme-Rheme or Topic-Focus structure must be introduced to account for the distinction between plain-locational and inverse-locational predication, in the languages that have distinct PLP and ILP constructions according to the criteria formulated in section 2.1. PLP and ILP constructions encode the same abstract predicate BE\_AT(FG, GR) ‘figure is at ground’, and all languages have a locational predication construction encoding the choice of the figure as the ‘Perspectival Center’, which constitutes the unmarked choice because of the ontological status of the two arguments of the abstract predicate BE\_AT. But some languages have grammaticalized a distinct predicative construction encoding the choice of the ground as the Perspectival Center: “An analogy can be made with a video camera and ‘what the camera is tracking’. A Predication sentence [i.e. a plain-locational sentence] keeps the camera fixed on the protagonist as she moves around (THING as Center), an Existential sentence [i.e. an inverse-locational sentence] is analogous to the way a security camera is fixed on a scene and records whatever is in that location (LOC as Center).” (Partee & Borschev 2007). Perspectival structure “is basically a structuring at the model-theoretic level ... [that] reflects cognitive structuring of the domains that we use language to talk about, and are not simply ‘given’ by the nature of the external world”. In other words, perspectival structure is basically a choice between different possible conceptualizations of a situation, not between different ways of packaging information, although the choice of a particular perspective may have consequences for the expression of information structure.

There is clearly a default alignment between perspectival structure and information structure, in the sense that the perspectival center is the default topic, but the two notions are nevertheless distinct. In my understanding of perspectival structure, this notion underlies not only the choice between PLP and ILP, but also between active and passive constructions, in the languages that have this distinction, or between converse predicates such as *X frightens Y* ~ *Y is afraid of X*.

Barbara Partee and Vladimir Borschev are formal semanticists, but a notion arguably identifiable to their perspectival structure has been discussed in the cognitive or ‘functional’ literature under names such as ‘viewpoint’ (DeLancey 1981) or ‘semantic starting point for the predication’. To put it in a nutshell, the idea is that syntactic structure reflects the fact that uttering a sentence referring to a given situation implies first ‘scanning’ the situation in a particular order. Starting from a participant inherently more salient than the others constitutes the unmarked way of carrying this operation, but depending on the individual languages, alternative constructions encoding the choice of another participant as the perspectival center may have been grammaticalized.

### 2.5. The alleged universality of ‘existential’ predication

It is widely assumed that all languages have a specialized ‘existential’ construction, cf. among others Moro (1992): “In all languages there is a specific construction which is called ‘existential sentence’.” However, such a statement does not mean much, given the current practice of using the label ‘existential’ loosely with reference to a family of constructions that are not delimited on the basis of a definition worthy of the name, and are variously distinguishable from each other in the languages of the world.

As regards inverse-locational predication specifically, according to the criteria formulated in section 2.1, many languages (probably more than half of the world’s languages) lack an ILP construction contrasting with a corresponding PLP construction, and in many of them,

contrary to a widespread opinion, it is even impossible to use variation in constituent order as a rough equivalent of the plain- vs inverse-locational predication contrast found in other languages.

In the remainder of the present article, predicative constructions used to encode figure-ground relationships with the unmarked perspectivization FG>GR, but also found in contexts in which other languages tend to select a distinct ILP construction, will be designated as general locational predication (GLP) constructions.

The locational construction of Welsh *mae N Loc* is a case in point. Moreover, as illustrated in (12), the constituent order in this construction is rigid, and definiteness marking of the subject is the only difference between the Welsh equivalents of English plain-locational and inverse-locational clauses.

(12) Welsh (Feuillet 1998: 691)

- a. *Mae 'r car yma.*  
is the car here  
'The car is here.'
- b. *Mae car yma.*  
is car here  
'There is a car here.'

Similarly, Mandinka (Mande) has no ILP construction distinct from a PLP construction. In Mandinka, the GLP construction *N bé Loc* is also used in contexts in which other languages tend to use a distinct ILP construction, with no possible variation in the linear order of the constituents. Moreover, definiteness marking does not ensure the distinction, since the so-called definite form of Mandinka nouns is a default form whose use is obligatory in many contexts. In Mandinka, semantic distinctions roughly similar to those expressed by the choice between plain and inverse locational predication in other languages can only be suggested by optional determiners, or by the focus marker *lè* attached to one of the two core terms of locational predication – example (13).

(13) Mandinka (pers.doc.)

- a. *Wùlôo bé yíróò kótò.*  
dog.D LCOP tree.D under  
'The dog is under the tree.' or 'There is a dog under the tree.'
- b. *Wùlôo lè bé yíróò kótò.*  
dog.D FOC LCOP tree.D under  
'There is a dog under the tree.' or 'It is the dog that is under the tree.'  
(in French, 'Il y a le chien sous l'arbre' would be another possible translation)
- c. *Wùlôo bé yíróò lè kótò.*  
dog.D LCOP tree.D FOC under  
'The dog is under the tree.' Or 'It is under the tree that the dog is.'

In Russian and other languages, the recognition of a distinct ILP construction is uncontroversial in some conditions, but problematic in others. As noted by Partee & Borschev (2002), under negation, case-marking and agreement sharply distinguish plain-locational and inverse-locational clauses, but in the absence of negation, "because of (a) great 'freedom' of

word order and (b) no articles, the difference between existential [i.e. inverse] and ‘plain’ sentences is less obvious”, and “it is natural to view the sentences in (14) as differing only in Theme-Rheme structure and word-order (and correspondingly in definiteness of the bare NP); the issue of whether there is any deeper syntactic difference between them is controversial”.

(14) Russian (Partee & Borschev 2002)

- a. *V gorode byl doktor.*  
 in town.PREP be.PST.SG.M doctor  
 ‘There was a doctor in town.’
- b. *Doktor byl v gorode.*  
 doctor be.PST.SG.M in town.PREP  
 ‘The doctor was in town.’

## 2.6. Inverse-locational predication and the expression of permanent presence and/or availability at some place

Cross-linguistically, the construction used to express episodic presence of a mobile entity at some place is often also used with reference to atypical figures or grounds (*There is a tree in front of the house*, *There is a dog behind you*, *There is a stain on the mirror*), habitual presence of an entity at some place (*There are many books in this library*), or availability of an entity at a place where it can be expected to be found (*There is cod at the fish market today*). However, many languages have constructions productively used to express such meanings but not available to encode the kind of meaning that identifies a construction as an ILP construction. This is the case of the Mandinka construction *N sòtótà (Loc)* illustrated in (8b) above, and also, for example, of the following constructions:

- German *es gibt N (Loc)*, lit. ‘it<sub>expl</sub> gives N (Loc)’.<sup>6</sup>
- Swedish *det finns N (Loc)* (Czinger 2002) and Norwegian *det finnes N (Loc)*, lit. ‘it<sub>expl</sub> finds itself N (Loc)’ (Gast & Haas 2011), with a mediopassive form of the verb ‘find’;
- Russian *imeetsja N (Loc)*, lit. ‘has itself N (Loc)’ with a mediopassive form of the verb ‘have’.

However, it would be hardly possible to develop a large-scale typological investigation of this question on the basis of the available literature, since this kind of precision can rarely be found in descriptive grammars. In most grammars, such constructions are simply grouped with those meeting the definition of ILP construction under the label ‘existential’, and it is impossible to know how to interpret the lack of examples contrasting typical inverse-locational clauses with clauses expressing related meanings such as long-term presence. This is the reason why, in the present article, I do not try to develop a typology of all the co-expression patterns analyzed by Koch (2012), and limit myself to alignment patterns involving plain-locational, inverse-locational, and possessive predication.

<sup>6</sup> Czinger (2002) provides a detailed analysis of the uses of German *es gibt* in contrast with those of the Alemannic inverse-locational predicator *es hot* ‘there is’ (lit. ‘it<sub>expl</sub> has’). On the development of this particular use of a verb ‘give’, see Gaeta (2013).

## 2.7. Inverse-locational predication and presentational sentences

Presentative utterances are speech events in which the speaker “call[s] the attention of an addressee to the hitherto unnoticed presence of some person or thing in the speech setting” (Lambrecht 1994: 39, 177), and the structural configurations conventionally used to encode presentative utterances can be called presentational constructions, or simply presentationals (Gast & Haas 2011: 128). Presentative utterances are “a special case of the more inclusive class ofthetic judgements” (Gast & Haas 2011: 132).<sup>7</sup>

The languages that have grammaticalized an ILP construction often have a complex presentational construction (sometimes called ‘existential cleft’) in which the NP presenting the new participant is introduced as the figure phrase in an inverse-locational clause, as in English *There are many students who work in supermarkets*. (15b), to be compared with the inverse-locational clause (15a), illustrates this kind of construction in Jóola Fóoñi (Niger-Congo, Atlantic).

(15) Jóola Fóoñi (pers.doc.)

- a. *Baj-ε      ε-wela      di      bɔ-son-a-b*  
have-CPL   SG-snake   in   SG-hole-D-CLb  
‘There is a snake in the hole.’
- b. *Baj-ε      a-maŋ-ε      ka-sancɛn      di      aw.*  
have-CPL   PTCP-want-ACT   INF-speak   with   you  
‘There is someone wanting to speak with you.’

‘Existential clefts’ constitute a common extension of inverse-locational predication, and the semantic motivation of this extension is obvious. However, there are many reasons for keeping apart the notions of inverse-locational predication and presentational sentences, in spite of the obvious connection between them. As discussed by Gast & Haas (2011) for Romance and Germanic languages, ‘existential clefts’ are in competition with other types of presentational constructions that differ in their distribution and in some of their semantic implications. For example, Spanish has two distinct presentational constructions: the cleft construction with the new participant introduced by the inverse-locational predicator *hay*, as in *Hay mucha gente que piensa así* ‘There are many people who think so’, and the inversion construction illustrated by *Entraron dos hombres con escopetas en la mano* ‘[There] entered two men with guns in their hands’. In Gast & Haas’ (2001) terminology, these two types are called ‘formulaic presentationals’ and ‘non-formulaic presentationals’, respectively.

Moreover, there is important cross-linguistic variation in the availability of ‘existential clefts’. For example, in comparison with Russian, French is particularly ‘liberal’ in the use of such constructions. As illustrated in (16), literal translations of French presentational sentences involving the inverse-locational predicator *il y a* into Russian are very often quite unnatural, if not completely ungrammatical.

(16) French (a) / Russian (b) (pers.knowl.)

- a. *Il      y      a      Jean      qui      veut      te      parler.*  
it<sub>expl</sub>   there<sub>expl</sub>   has   Jean   who   wants   to\_you   talk  
lit. ‘There is Jean who wants to talk to you.’

<sup>7</sup> Onthetic judgements, see Ladusaw (1994).

- b. \**Est' Ivan kotoryj xočet govorit' s toboj.*  
 there\_is Ivan who wants talk with you

## 2.8. Inverse-locational predication and negation

In some of the languages that have grammaticalized an ILP construction, no special negative strategy is required in inverse-locational clauses (English *there is* / *there is not*, French *il y a* / *il n'y a pas*, Spanish *hay* / *no hay*, etc.). Some others have a special negative strategy, including the use of suppletive negative inverse-locational predicators, as Turkish *var* 'be present' / *yok* 'be absent' – example (17).

(17) Turkish (pers.doc.)

- a. *Masa-da bir kitap var.*  
 table-LOC one book ILP  
 'There is a book on the table.'
- b. *Masa-da kitap yok.*  
 table-LOC book ILP.NEG  
 'There is no book on the table.'

However, special negative strategies (including suppletion) are cross-linguistically common not only in inverse-locational predication, but also in identificational and plain-locational predication, i.e. in the other types of predication commonly termed 'copular' or 'non-verbal' predication.

Given the central topic of the present article, the question of negation in inverse-locational clauses need not be developed further. On the one hand, it makes little sense to isolate the question of special negative strategies in ILP predication from the question of special negative strategies in other types of non-verbal predication, and on the other hand, in most languages, including those with an inverse-locational predicator not related morphologically to the corresponding plain-locational predicator (such as Turkish, see example (17)), negative ILP constructions belong to the same type as the corresponding positive constructions. There are exceptions, for example Polish and Romanian (see section 3.10), but in my language sample, negative ILP constructions belonging to another type than the corresponding PLP construction are rather exceptional. Moreover, cross-linguistically, negation is not the only factor that may condition the use of an ILP construction (in section 3.10, we will see that, in Serbo-Croat, tense is the only relevant factor), and generally speaking, I am aware of no real explanation for the fact that, in some languages, the availability of an ILP construction is conditioned by factors such as negation and/or tense.

On negative 'existential' predicators, their relationship with standard negation and their diachrony, the reader is referred to Veselinova (2013, 2014, 2016).

## 3. Morphosyntactic typology of inverse-locational predication

### 3.1. Prolegomena to the morphosyntactic typology of ILP constructions

#### 3.1.1. Introductory remarks

In a typology of inverse-locational predication, the most basic distinction is between languages in which a predicative construction distinct from plain-locational predication is

available to encode an alternative perspectivization of prototypical figure-ground relationships, and languages in which no such predicative construction exists. The situation of the languages that only have a GLP construction will be further discussed in section 3.2.

As regards the possible criteria for typologizing ILP constructions, the crucial point is that a typological approach not limited to a particular group of languages can only be based on the possible formal affinities between ILP constructions and predicative constructions of other functional types, and cannot rely on criteria referring to language-specific notions such as ‘subject’. For example, in a typology of Romance or Germanic ILP constructions, it makes sense to discuss the extent to which the figure phrase in inverse-locational clauses shows subjectal properties, since in Romance and Germanic languages, the notion of subject is well-established, and the figure phrase in plain-locational clauses invariably shows the properties considered typical for subjects, whereas in inverse-locational clauses, there is important variation in the behavior of the figure phrase with respect to the properties in question, and in the possible presence of expletive locatives or pronouns exhibiting some subject properties. But such a characterization of ILP constructions can only be extended to languages with the particular system of grammatical relations found in Germanic and Romance languages.

For similar reasons, the morphological nature of inverse-locational predicators is not a possible criterion in a general typology of ILP constructions. Some of the languages in which verbs are characterized by a rich inflectional system have inverse-locational predicators that are uncontroversial verbs (Spanish *haber* is a good example, since it is inflected for TAM like any other verb), but inverse-locational verbs are very often defective or irregular, and there is no universal criterion according to which irregular/defective verbs could be consistently distinguished from non-verbal predicators.

According to the criterion of formal resemblance with predicative constructions expressing other functional types of predication, I propose to distinguish seven types. Three of them have a particularly wide distribution in the languages of the world: not only the *there\_be*-ILP type, which figures prominently in the literature on ‘existentials’ (section 3.3), but also the *have*-ILP type (section 3.4), and the type characterized by the use of specialized inverse-locational predicators (section 3.9). The *there\_have*-ILP type (section 3.5), the *incorporated-figure*-ILP type (section 3.6), the *be\_with*-ILP type (section 3.7), and the *it\_be*-ILP type (section 3.8), have a much more limited distribution.

Before discussing the definitions and properties of the seven possible types of ILP constructions, a brief sketch of the typology of plain-locational and possessive predication is in order, since alignment with these two functional types of predication is crucial in the typology of ILP constructions.

### *3.1.2. The typology of plain-locational predication*

Plain-locational predication does not seem to show cross-linguistic variation in the coding of the ground phrase, uniformly aligned with that of adjuncts localizing the event in verbal predication.

A distinction can be made between locational constructions involving an overt copula (or copular verb), and constructions with mere juxtaposition of the figure phrase and the ground phrase. As illustrated in (18), both options may be available in the same language, depending on factors such as TAM, person, etc.



## (18) Russian (pers.knowl.)

- a. *Kniga na stole.*  
 book on table  
 ‘The book is on the table.’
- b. *Kniga byla na stole.*  
 book be.PST.SG.F on table  
 ‘The book was on the table.’

Locational predicators may be regular verbs with full verbal inflection, more or less irregular and/or defective verbs, or words or clitics whose functional affinity with verbs has no morphological correlate. The historical explanation is that locational predicators may grammaticalize from sources other than verbs (for example, demonstratives).

A distinction can be made between locational predicators whose lexical meaning is limited to the establishment of a particular kind of predicative relationship, and locational predicators implying additional specifications such as deixis, animacy, or posture. Some languages (for example, Japanese) have two distinct locational predicators depending on the animacy of the figure. Many languages use posture verbs (‘lie’, ‘sit’, ‘stand’, ‘hang’) as locational predicators, irrespective of whether the specification of the posture of the figure is communicatively relevant or not. In some languages, this specification is obligatory, in others (for example, German, cf. (19)) it is optional.

## (19) German (Koch 2012)

- a. *Das Buch ist auf dem Tisch.*  
 the book is on the table  
 ‘The book is on the table.’
- b. *Das Buch liegt auf dem Tisch.*  
 the book lies on the table  
 ‘The book is (lying) on the table.’

Another parameter commonly considered in the typology of locational predication is alignment with equative predication. Equative and plain-locational predication may involve the same predicator, or equally consist of mere juxtaposition of their two core terms, but they may also involve two distinct predicators, as in (20), or one of them may involve an overt predicator, whereas the other consists of mere juxtaposition.

## (20) Mandinka (Mande; pers.doc.)

- a. *Ĵ fàamáa mù dánòò lè tí.*  
 1SG father ECOP hunter.D FOC as  
 ‘My father is a hunter.’
- b. *Ĵ fàamáa bè kánkánò kónò.*  
 1SG father LCOP garden.D in  
 ‘My father is in the garden.’

## 3.1.3. The typology of predicative possession

In accordance with common practice, ‘predicative possession’ is used here as an abbreviation for ‘direct/plain predicative possession’, i.e. predicative constructions encoding a

variety of possessor-possessee relationships with the unmarked perspectivization ‘possessor>possessee’, illustrated by English *John has a book* (as opposed to inverse predicative possession expressing the alternative perspective ‘possessee>possessor’, illustrated by English *The book is John’s*). As a rule, languages have a limited number of predicative constructions (often just one) available to express a relatively wide range of possessive relationships.

Heine (1997) and Stassen (2009) constitute the most detailed and comprehensive accounts of the typology of predicative possession published so far. Although they differ in important respects, they basically agree on the types of predicative possession that can be identified in the world’s languages.<sup>8</sup> Apart from definitional and terminological issues, the main difference between the typology of predicative possession sketched in this section and those proposed by Heine and Stassen is the rejection of the so-called Topic Possessive type as a possible basic type of predicative possession. For a detailed discussion of this point, readers are referred to Chappell & Creissels (2019).

With very few exceptions,<sup>9</sup> possessive predication constructions can be identified as belonging to one of following three types:

- the TRANSPOSSESSIVE type, with the possessor and the possessee coded like the agent and the patient in transitive predication;
- the S-POSSESSOR type, with the possessor coded like S in intransitive verbal predication or like the figure in plain-locational predication, and the possessee showing some non-core coding;
- the S-POSSESSEE type, with the possessee coded like S in intransitive verbal predication or like the figure in plain-locational predication, and the possessor showing some non-core coding.

(21b), to be compared to (21a), illustrates the transpossession type,

(21) Belarusian (Mazzitelli 2015)

- a. *Ėn kupiŭ mašynu.*  
3SG.M buy.PST.SG.M car.ACC  
‘He bought a car.’
- b. *Ėn meŭ mašynu.*  
3SG.M have.PST.SG.M car.ACC  
‘He had a car.’

The S-possessor type can be further divided into two subtypes:

- the INCORPORATED-POSSESSEE type, in which the possessor is the S argument of a propriative predicate (either verb or adjective) derived from the noun designating the possessee, as in (22);

<sup>8</sup> For a formal analysis of the different types of predicative possession identified in the typological literature, see Myler (2016)

<sup>9</sup> For example, in the possessive clauses of Finnish, the possessor is in the adessive case, which suggests that the construction belongs to the S-possessee type, but the case marking of the possessee is not that expected in an S-possessee construction, since personal pronouns in possessee function are in the accusative case (Creissels 2013). Maltese, analyzed by Comrie (1989: 221-222), is another case in point.

- the COMITATIVE-POSSESSEE type, with the coding of the possessor and the possessee aligned with the coding of the NPs referring to an individual and his/her companion in comitative predication, as in (23).

(22) Kalaallisut (Eskimo-Aleut, Eskimo; Van Geenhoven 1998: 25)

*Angut taana illu-qar-puq.*

man that house-PROPR-IND.3SG

‘That man has a house.’ lit. ‘This man is house-owning.’

(23) Hausa (Afroasiatic, Chadic; Newman 2000: 222)

*Yārō yanā dà fensir̃.*

boy 3SG.M.ICPL with pencil

‘The boy has a pencil.’ lit. ‘The boy is with pencil.’

The S-possessee type can be further divided into two subtypes:

- the OBLIQUE-POSSESSOR type, with the possessor showing some kind of oblique marking: adessive (as in (24b), to be compared with (24a)), comitative, benefactive, etc.;
- the GENITIVE-POSSESSOR type, illustrated in (25), with the possessor and the possessee showing the same coding characteristics (genitive marking of the possessor and/or possessive or construct marking of the possessee) as in adnominal possession.

(24) Belarusian<sup>10</sup> (Mazzitelli 2015)

a. *Mašyna byla kalja jaho.*

car be.PST.SG.F near 3SG.M.GEN

‘The car was near to him.’

b. *U jaho byla mašyna.*

at 3SG.M.GEN be.PST.SG.F car

‘He had a car.’ lit. ‘At him was a car.’

(25) Turkish (pers.doc.)

a. *Murat-in otomobil-i*

Murat-GEN car-CSTR

‘Murat’s car’ (noun phrase including an adnominal possessor)

b. *Murat-in otomobil-i var.*

Murat-GEN car-CSTR ILP

‘Murat has a car’

(possessive clause, lit. ‘Of\_Murat his\_car is present’)

### 3.2. Languages having only a general locational predication construction

#### 3.2.1. General observations

One may not agree with this decision, but following Borschev and Partee (see the quote in section 2.5), I consider that the recognition of an ILP construction expressing an alternative

<sup>10</sup> The Belarusian possessive constructions illustrated in (21b) and (24b) do not have the same range of uses but, for many semantic types of possession, both are available without any difference in meaning.

perspectivization of figure-ground relationships is not justified for clauses constituting the equivalent of English clauses such as *There is a cat in the tree* whose only difference with the equivalent of *The cat is in the tree* lies in morphosyntactic devices generally applicable to predicative constructions, such as variation in constituent order, definiteness marking, or topic/focus marking. For example, I do not analyze Russian *V dereve byla koška* ‘There was a cat in the tree’ and *Koška byla v dereve* ‘The cat was in the tree’ as instantiating an ILP construction contrasting with a PLP construction, but as two variants of the same GLP construction, since, in Russian, a similar variation in constituent order expressing variation in information structure is found in other predicative constructions, for example in the basic transitive construction, as in *Okno razbil Ivan* ‘IVAN broke the window’ vs *Ivan razbil okno* ‘Ivan broke the window’. For the same reasons, I do not consider that the difference in topic marking in the Japanese equivalents of e.g. *There is a cat in the tree* / *The cat is in the tree* justifies positing an ILP construction distinct from the corresponding PLP construction, since the same possibility of variation in topic marking is a general property of the predicative constructions of Japanese.

According to this criterion, probably more than half of the world’s languages lack an ILP construction. In such languages, the predicative construction expressing spatial relationships between a figure and a ground can be characterized as a general locational predication (GLP) construction. All major language families (Indo-European, Uralic, Sino-Tibetan, Austronesian, Afroasiatic, Niger-Congo, Tupi-Guarani, etc.) include languages both with and without distinct ILP constructions. The same situation is also found in many language groups with a relatively low degree of historical depth, which suggests that, in the history of languages, the rise and decay of ILP constructions must be very common phenomena.

In particular, ILP constructions may lose their marked status and be reanalyzed as GLP constructions. Juba Arabic (an Arabic-based Creole spoken in South Sudan) provides a particularly clear case of such an evolution. As a rule, Arabic varieties have ILP constructions characterized by the obligatory use of an expletive locative comparable to *there* in the ILP construction of English, but in Juba Arabic this expletive is also found in locational clauses that do not involve inversion of the unmarked FG>GR perspective, which means that it has been reanalyzed as a locational copula in a GLP construction (Manfredi 2017: 115-116).

Given that language groups with a relatively low degree of historical depth often include languages both with and without a distinct ILP construction, the presence or absence of an ILP construction in a language must not be expected to correlate with other typological features. In fact, the only correlation suggested by the cross-linguistic data I have been able to collect is that ILP constructions seem to be relatively rare in the languages that make a systematic use of postural verbs as locational predictors.

### 3.2.2. *Constituent order alternations in GLP constructions*

In many of the languages that only have a GLP construction, constituent order in the GLP construction is flexible, and variation in constituent order provides a rough equivalent of the GR>FG perspectivization. Two variants of this situation are particularly well attested.

In languages with basic Patient-Verb order in transitive predication, the basic constituent order in locational predication is often FG GR Pred, with the ground phrase immediately before the locational predictor, with alternative order GR FG Pred as a rough equivalent of the GR>FG perspectivization, as in (26).

## (26) Basque (pers.doc.)

- a. *Parke-a ibai-ondo-an dago.*  
 park-SG river-side-SG.LOC be.PRS.3SG  
 ‘The park is next to the river.’
- b. *Ibai-ondo-an parke eder bat dago.*  
 river-side-SG.LOC park lovely one be.PRS.3SG  
 ‘There is a lovely park next to the river.’

In Japanese (example (27)), in addition to the constituent order alternation, the topic marker *wa* is commonly used to mark the figure in the FG GR Pred variant, and the ground in the GR FG Pred variant.

## (27) Japanese (pers.doc.)

- a. *Hon wa/ga tsukue no ue ni aru.*  
 book TOP/SUBJ table GEN top at be.PRS  
 ‘The book is on the table.’
- b. *Tsukue no ue ni (wa) hon ga aru.*  
 table GEN top at TOP book SUBJ be.PRS  
 ‘There is a book on the table.’

In the documentation I have gathered, a similar alternation is also mentioned in the following languages:

Avar (Nakh-Daghestanian; pers.doc.)  
 Buryat (Mongolic; Skribnik 2003)  
 Georgian (Kartvelian; Hewitt 1995)  
 Hayu (Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman; Michailovsky 1988)  
 Lezgi (Nakh-Daghestanian; Haspelmath 1993)  
 Paez (isolate, Colombia; Rojas Curieux 1998)  
 Palula (Indo-European, Indo-Aryan, Dardic; Liljegren 2008)  
 Slave (Athabaskan; Rice 1989)  
 Ts’amakko (Afro-Asiatic, Cushitic; Savà 2005)  
 Udihe (Tungusic; Nikolaeva & Tolskaya 2001)  
 Zhaba (Tibeto-Burman, Qiangic; Shirai 2008)

In languages with basic Verb-Patient order in transitive predication, the basic constituent order in locational predication is often FG Pred GR, with the ground phrase after the locational predicator, and the alternative order GR Pred FG as a rough equivalent of GR>FG perspectivization, as already illustrated for Russian in example (14) above. Finnish provides another illustration – example (28).

## (28) Finnish (Uralic, Huomo 2003: 464)

- a. *Poika on piha-lla.*  
 boy be.PRS.3SG yard-ADESS  
 ‘The boy is in the yard.’

- b. *Piha-lla on poika.*  
 yard-ADESS be.PRS.3SG boy  
 ‘There is a boy in the yard.’

In the documentation I have gathered, a similar alternation is also attested in the following languages:

Czech (Indo-European, Slavic; Rambousek & Chamonikosasová 2007)  
 Estonian (Uralic, Finnic; Lehist 1969)  
 Kabyle (Afro-Asiatic, Berber; Amina Mettouchi, pers.com.)  
 Latvian (Indo-European, Baltic; Veksler & Jurik 1975)  
 Lithuanian (Indo-European, Baltic; Kalėdaitė 2008)  
 Romanian (Indo-European, Romance; pers.doc.)

Among the languages in which the figure phrase and the ground phrase in locational predication are simply juxtaposed, basic FG GR order with the possibility of de-topicalizing the figure by means of the alternative order GR FG is attested in Nyangumarta (Western Pama-Nyungan; Sharp 2004), whereas basic GR FG order with the possibility of de-topicalizing the figure by means of the alternative order FG GR is attested in Maori (Austronesian, Oceanic, Polynesian; Chung & Ladusaw 2003).

### 3.2.3. Languages with rigid constituent order in a GLP construction

Contrary to a widespread belief, constituent order alternations are not general among the languages that have a GLP construction. Many of them have locational clauses with a rigid constituent order that excludes the possibility of de-topicalizing the figure by moving the figure phrase. In such languages, in the absence of indications provided by definiteness marking or focus marking, the same locational clauses can be used indiscriminately in contexts that would trigger the choice of an ILP construction in other languages, as already illustrated for Welsh in (12) and for Mandinka in (13) above. Mangarayi (Gunwingguan) provides an additional illustration – example (29).

- (29) Mangarayi (Merlan 1982)  
*Mawuj ja-Ø-ni biyangin na-bongan.*  
 food 3-3SG-be inside LOC-box  
 ‘There’s food in the box.’ or ‘The food is in the box.’

This configuration (rigid constituent order in locational predication and no distinct ILP construction) is very unevenly distributed across the languages of the world. It is largely predominant in the linguistic area known as the ‘Sudanic belt’ (a large belt of northern sub-Saharan Africa from the Atlantic Ocean to the Ethiopian plateau), but not very common elsewhere in the world (including the remainder of the African continent: among the 100 Bantu language sample analyzed by Devos *et al.* (2019), this configuration is only attested in languages spoken in the part of the Bantu domain overlapping with the Sudanic belt).

Outside of the Sudanic belt, the languages for which this situation is attested in the documentation I have gathered are as follows:

Beja (Afro-Asiatic, Cushitic; Martine Vanhove, pers.com.)  
Gaelic (Indo-European, Celtic; Lamb 2003)  
ṢHöã (Kx'a; Collins & Grüber 2014)  
Irish (Indo-European, Celtic; Harley 1995)  
Kalkatungu (Pama-Nyungan; Barry Blake, pers.com., cited in Bentley 2013)  
Kamaiurá (Tupi-Guarani; Seki 2000)  
Nengee (English-based Creole; Goury & Migge 2003)  
Retuarã (Tucanoan; Strom 1992)  
Puyuma (Austronesian; Ross & Teng 2005, Teng 2014)  
Seri (isolate, Mexico; Stephen Marlett, pers.com.)  
Trumai (isolate, Brazil; Guirardello-Damian 2007)  
Urim (Toricelli; Wood 2012)  
Wa (Austroasiatic, Mon-Khmer; Seng Mai 2012)  
Wampis (Jivaroan; Peña 2015)  
Yéli Dnye (isolate, New Guinea; Levinson 2006)  
!Xun (Kx'a; Heine & König 2015)

As regards the Sudanic belt, in Creissels (2019a), I analyze a sample of 116 languages from the various language families represented in this area, among which 73 (63.4%) have a GLP construction with rigid constituent order.

Since the languages of the Sudanic belt are predominantly SVO languages, this finding contradicts the common opinion that 'existential' constructions in basic SVO languages typically have the word order GR Pred FG (Freeze 1992: 256), or that non-canonical word order is a typical characteristic of 'existential' constructions (Veselinova 2013: 108). Such statements can only be explained by a European (or Eurasian) bias in the data taken into account.

The rigidity of constituent order in the locational predication constructions of the languages of the Sudanic belt is not unexpected, since more generally, rigidity of constituent order is a typical feature of the languages of this area. What is, however, theoretically interesting is that, given the tendency observed elsewhere in the world, this particular rigidity in constituent order could be expected to favor the development of constructions expressing the inversion of the FG>GR perspective in locational predication. However, this assumption is contradicted by the data, since only 36 of the 116 languages of the Sudanic belt examined in Creissels (2019a) have ILP constructions.

#### *3.2.4. Obligatoriness vs optionality of the ground phrase in GLP constructions*

In GLP constructions, the ground phrase may be syntactically optional, its absence being interpreted as denoting presence at an unspecified place (presence at the deictic center being a possible interpretation depending on the context). This possibility is explicitly mentioned in the descriptions of the following languages:

Kokota (Austronesian, Oceanic; Palmer 1999)  
Lingala (Niger-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantu; Bwantsa-Kafungu 1982)  
Palula (Indo-European, Indo-Aryan, Dardic; Liljegren 2008)  
Pana (Niger-Congo, Gur; Beyer 2006)  
Sango (Ubangian; Diki-Kidiri 1977)

Semelai (Austroasiatic, Mon-Khmer; Kruspe 2004)  
 Tadaksahak (Songhay; Christiansen-Bolli 2010)  
 Tiv (Niger-Congo, Benue-Congo; Abraham 1940)  
 Wa (Austroasiatic, Mon-Khmer; Seng Mai 2012)

This may happen even in locational predication that do not involve an overt predicator, in which case an utterance reduced to a noun phrase may be interpreted as a locational clause expressing presence at an unspecified place, cf. for example Chung & Ladusaw (2003: 54): “in modern Maori, affirmative existential sentences look as though they consist simply of an indefinite noun phrase”. In the documentation I have gathered, this possibility is also signaled in Kayardild (Tangkic; Evans 1995), Tolai (Austronesian, Oceanic; Mosel 1984), and Wambaya (Mirndi; Nordlinger 1993).

However, the possibility of expressing presence at an unspecified place by simply omitting the ground phrase in locational predication seems to exist only in a minority of the languages that have a GLP construction. In the others, the ground phrase is an obligatory constituent of locational predication, and if no specific place is targeted, a locative expression normally interpreted anaphorically or deictically (‘there’, as in Bobo – example (30) –, or ‘in it’) acts as a mere place filler.

(30) Bobo (Le Bris & Prost 1981: 55)

- a. *Yàlāló tī sɔ́nón mà.*  
 bird LCOP tree on  
 ‘There is a bird on the tree.’
- b. *Kpìn tí yē.*  
 wine LCOP there  
 ‘There is wine.’

In some languages, for example Mandinka (cf. (8c) above) or Tigemaxo (Mande, cf. (31)), locational predication with such a default ground phrase is a usual way to express pure existence.

(31) Tigemaxo (Blecke 1996: 205-206)

- a. *Dɔ ye ga Kuntoolo.*  
 DEM PL COP Kuntoolo  
 ‘They are in Kuntoolo.’
- b. *Ala ga gɔ.*  
 God COP there  
 ‘God exists.’ (lit. ‘God is there.’)

In the documentation I have gathered, the non-referential use of ‘there’ or ‘in it’ as a default ground phrase in a GLP construction is also attested in the following languages:

Baule (Niger-Congo, Kwa; pers.doc.)  
 Ewe (Niger-Congo, Kwa; Felix Ameka, pers.com.)<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Ewe has the particularity that the default ground phrase in locational predication is not a locative expression, but a third person singular pronoun. This is consistent with the fact that this third person singular pronoun can



Gbaya (Ubangian; Roulon-Doko 1998)

Goemai (Chadic; Hellwig 2011)

Lau (Austronesian, Oceanic; Singer 2002)

Oko (Niger-Congo, Benue-Congo; Atoyebi 2008)

### 3.3. The *there\_be*-ILP type

#### 3.3.1. Definition and illustrations

*There\_be*-ILP constructions differ from plain-locational predication by the obligatory presence of a locative expletive. In most cases, the presence of the locative expletive implies a constituent order distinct from that found in the corresponding PLP construction. English *There is N (Loc)* is a typical *there\_be*-ILP construction.

The locative expletive that characterizes *there\_be*-ILP constructions is a word or clitic found in other constructions with a referential meaning such as ‘there’ or ‘in it’, but whose only function in the ILP construction is to mark the construction as distinct from PLP. Crucially, in the ILP construction, it is obligatory even in the presence of a referential locative expression representing the ground, and even if the meaning it carries in other constructions is not compatible with that of the ground phrase (for example, if the ground phrase is an interrogative proform ‘where?’, as in *WHERE is THERE a cat?*). This distinguishes the expletive locatives that constitute the distinctive feature of *there\_be*-ILP constructions from the default locatives sometimes found in GLP constructions, cf. (30) and (31) above. (32b) illustrates the *there\_be*-ILP construction of Italian.

(32) Italian (pers.knowl.)

- a. *La chiave è sul tavolo.*  
the key is on\_the table  
‘The key is on the table.’
- b. *C’è una chiave sul tavolo.*  
there<sub>expl</sub> is a key on\_the table  
‘There is a key on the table.’

Sardinian varieties have ILP constructions with a choice between two possible locative expletives. One of them is neutral in terms of deixis, whereas the other is sensitive to the distal vs proximal distinction (Bentley *et al.* 2015: 110-111).

In Genovese and other Italo-Romance varieties (example (33)), the *there\_be*-ILP construction also includes a third person masculine expletive subject clitic.

(33) Genovese (Bentley *et al.* 2013: 16)

- Sta attenta che inte sta früta u gh’è tanti ossi.*  
stay.2SG.IMPER careful that in this fruit 3SG.M<sub>expl</sub> there<sub>expl</sub> be many seeds  
‘Be careful that there are (litt. ‘it is there’) many seeds in this fruit.’

Like Italian, Standard Arabic has an ILP construction involving a locative expletive whose original meaning is ‘there’ (example (34b)), and the use of non-referential ‘there’ as a marker of the ILP construction is also attested in Tunisian Arabic (*fämmä*; Darine Saïdi, pers.com.).

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also be used anaphorically in the same position to refer to an already mentioned location (Felix Ameka, pers.com.).

and Maltese (*hemm*; Koch 2012). Palestinian Arabic and most other Eastern Arabic varieties (Egyptian Arabic, Gulf Arabic, etc.) have ILP constructions with a locative expletive *fīh* whose literal meaning is ‘in it’ – example (35).

(34) Standard Arabic (Aziz 1995)

- a. *Ar-rajulu fī-l-maktabi.*  
D-man in-D-office.GEN  
‘The man is in the office.’
- b. *Hunāka rajulu-n fī-l-maktabi.*  
there<sub>expl</sub> man-INDEF in-D-office.GEN  
‘There is a man in the office.’

(35) Palestinian Arabic (Hoyt 2000: 119)

- Baḡa / Baḡu fī-h ulād fī-d-dār.*  
be.PST.3SG.M/ be.PST.3SG.M in-it<sub>expl</sub> child.PL in-D-house  
‘There were children in the house.’

ILP constructions marked by the combination of a locative preposition and an expletive pronoun (‘at/in it’) are widespread in the Oceanic family, especially among Polynesian languages.

In Nahuatl (Uto-Aztecan), the prefix *on-* added to the locational verb *cah-* in inverse-locational predication acts with other verbs as an andative marker (i.e. a marker encoding movement towards a place distinct from the deictic center) – example (36).

(36) Classical Nahuatl (Launey 1981)

- a. *N-on-no-tlātia.*  
1SG-AND-REFL-hide  
‘I am going to hide.’
- b. *Nicān on-cah ātl.*  
here AND<sub>expl</sub>-be water  
‘There is water here.’

Many Bantu languages have a variant of the *there\_be*-ILP type in which the expletive locative acting as ILP marker is a locative class index occupying the subject index slot, as in (37b), cf. also Devos *et al.* (2019). This construction can be analyzed as a presentational inversion construction in which the subject of the locative clause is demoted, and the role of subject is taken over by the locative expression representing the ground.

(37) Citumbuka (Chavula 2016: 23, 158)

- a. *Muphika u-li pa-moto.*  
NP3.pot CL3-be CL16-NP3.fire  
‘The pot is on the cooking fire.’
- b. *Ku-munda ku-li nkhalamu.*  
NP17-CL3.crop\_field CL17-be NP10.lion  
‘There are lions at the crop-field.’

### 3.3.2. The grammaticalization of *there\_be*-ILP constructions

The expletive locative acting as ILP marker in *there\_be*-ILP constructions occurs in other constructions with a deictic/anaphoric meaning ('at/in that place'), but in inverse-locational clauses, it is not referential, otherwise sentences such as *THERE is a cat HERE* or *WHERE is THERE a cat?* would not be acceptable. What was originally a deictic locative has grammaticalized into a marker encoding the inversion of the unmarked FG>GR perspective.

The grammaticalization path is easy to imagine. For example, starting from a situation in which the basic order FG Pred GR has a variant GR Pred FG expressing a change in topic-comment articulation, as in example (28) above, the topicalization of the ground yields a construction GR<sub>i</sub>, *there<sub>i</sub>* Pred FG or *there<sub>i</sub>* Pred FG, GR<sub>i</sub> in which the position immediately before the locational predicator in the inverted construction is occupied by a deictic locative co-referent with a locative expression in dislocated position. The variant with the ground phrase in right dislocation position may subsequently be re-analyzed as a construction of its own in which the ground phrase is in clause-internal position (and can in particular be questioned, as in *Where is there a cat?*), which implies that the deictic locative has become a non-referential element whose only function is to mark the construction as distinct from plain-locational predication. This evolution may be favored by the fact that, in many languages lacking an ILP construction, locative deictics can be used in locational predication with an arbitrary rather than deictic or anaphoric reading – see section 3.2.4.

### 3.3.3. The *there\_be*-ILP type in the languages of the world

*There\_be*-ILP constructions are found in several Arabic varieties (including Maltese),<sup>12</sup> and are very common among Romance, Germanic, and Bantu languages. Devos *et al.* (2019) have found it in 57 out of the 100 Bantu languages of their sample. In the documentation I have gathered, outside of these four groups of languages, this type is attested in the following languages:

- Emérillon (Tupi-Guarani; Rose 2003)
- Gullah (English-based Creole; Michaelis *et al.* 2013)
- Jamsay (Dogon; Heath 2008)
- Mwotlap (Austronesian, Oceanic; Alexandre François, pers.com.)
- Nahuatl (Uto-Aztecan; Launey 1981)
- O'otam (Uto-Aztecan; Franco Hernández 2010)
- Palauan (Austronesian, Malayo-Polynesian; Freeze 2001)
- Samoaan (Austronesian, Oceanic, Polynesian)
- Toro Tegu (Dogon; Heath 2015)
- Zaar (Afro-Asiatic, Chadid; Bernard Caron, pers.com.)

In fact, *there\_be*-ILP constructions are not particularly common at world level. However, due to their presence in some major Germanic and Romance languages (English and Italian in the first place), there is a huge literature devoted to the discussion of the syntactic status of the figure phrase and of the locative expletive in *there\_be*-ILP constructions. Depending on the

<sup>12</sup> However, specialized inverse-locational predicators with various etymologies are also common across Arabic varieties (Creissels 2019b). Note also that, as already mentioned, in Juba Arabic, the locative expletive *fi* (Classical Arabic *fi-hi* 'in it') has been reanalyzed as a locational copula in a GLP construction (Manfredi 2017: 115-116).

individual languages, the locative expletive may share some formal properties with canonical subjects (this is the case of *there* in the English ILP construction, but not of Italian *ci*). As regards the figure phrase, in the languages in question, it uncontroversially fulfills the subject function in the PLP construction, but its behavior in the ILP construction shows variation, in particular with respect to the control of verb agreement, and consequently such constructions figure prominently in discussions about impersonality (cf. among others Gast & Haas 2011). In this respect, the situation in Romance or Germanic languages is interesting to compare to that of Bantu languages (cf. (37)), in which a locative class marker occupies the subject index slot and can be analyzed as expressing agreement with the ground phrase in subject function.

### 3.4. The have-ILP type

#### 3.4.1. Definition and illustrations

Have-ILP constructions involve a predicator distinct from that found in plain-locational predication but also used in a transpossessionive construction, and the figure phrase is encoded like the possessee in possessive predication, i.e. like the patient in transitive predication. The syntactic position occupied by the possessor phrase in possessive predication is either left empty or occupied by an expletive element.

For example, in its transitive construction, the Greek verb *écho* ‘have’ has a nominative subject (the possessor) with which it agrees, and an accusative object (the possessee), as in (38a). But this verb also has an inverse-locational use in an impersonal construction with an accusative NP representing the figure, but no nominative NP, the verb invariably including a non-referential 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular index, as in (38b). Examples (39) and (40) illustrate have-ILP constructions in languages that do not have subject-verb agreement, and in which the omission of the noun phrase preceding the transitive verb of possession is the only thing that differentiates inverse-locational predication from possessive predication.

#### (38) Greek (Indo-European; pers.doc.)

- a. *Ta chōriá den échoun dáskalous.*  
the villages NEG have.PRS.3PL teachers.ACC  
‘The villages don’t have teachers.’
- b. *Den eíche dáskalous sta chōriá.*  
NEG have.PST.3SG teachers.ACC in\_the villages  
‘There were no teachers in the villages.’ (also interpretable as  
‘He/she did not have teachers in the villages.’ in an appropriate context)

#### (39) Vietnamese (Austroasiatic, Mon-Khmer; pers.doc.)

- a. *Tôi có sách.*  
I have book  
‘I have books.’
- b. *Có một con ruồi trong bát canh của tôi.*  
have one CLF fly in bowl soup of me  
‘There was a fly in my soup.’

(40) Palikur (Arawak; Launey 2003: 80)<sup>13</sup>

- a. *Nah kadahan aynesa karukri.*  
 I have some money  
 ‘I have some money.’
- b. *Kadahan im ahakwa un.*  
 have fish in water  
 ‘There are fish in the water.’

### 3.4.2. The distinction between possessive predication and inverse-locational predication of the have-ILP type

Have-ILP constructions may be ambiguous with possessive predication involving a third person possessor, as in (38b) above. Fourteenth-century Tuscan (41) and Wolof (42) provide additional illustrations.

(41) Fourteenth-century Tuscan (Ciconte 2013)

- Nelle parti di Grecia ebbe un signore.*  
 in\_the parts of Greece have.PST.3SG a sir  
 ‘Somewhere in Greece there was a sir.’

(42) Wolof (Atlantic; Creissels *et al.* 2015)

- Am na woto.*  
 have PRF.3SG car  
 ‘He/she has a car.’ or ‘There is a car.’

In (43), a possessive reading would be at odds with our knowledge of the world, but from a strictly linguistic point of view, ‘They have a fly bothering me’ would be a possible reading.

(43) African American English (Green 2002: 82)

- Dey got a fly messing with me.*  
 they have a fly messing with me  
 ‘There is a fly bothering me.’

In other languages, have-ILP constructions are organized in a way that limits or even rules out the possibility of ambiguity with the possessive use of ‘have’. In Alemannic (example (44)), the obligatory presence of an expletive third person neuter pronoun limits the possibility of ambiguity, since possessors are typically human, and therefore represented rather by masculine or feminine pronouns.

(44) Alemannic (Germanic; Czinglar 2002)

- Es hot Rössr voram Hus.*  
 3SG.N have.PRS.3SG horses in\_front\_of\_the house  
 ‘There are horses in front of the house.’

<sup>13</sup> In Palikur, *kadahan* ‘have’ was originally a monovalent predicate ‘be the owner of something’ consisting of the proprietive prefix *ka-* ‘endowed with’ and the generic noun *dahan* ‘possession’, but it is now used in a construction in which it is followed by a noun phrase to which the role of possessee is assigned.

### 3.4.3. The historical development of have-ILP constructions

The historical development of have-ILP constructions from transpossessionive constructions can be analyzed as starting from the impersonalization of the possessive construction:<sup>14</sup>

*X has Y*

- >  $\emptyset$  has Y<sup>15</sup>      ‘(at some place) one has Y’
- >  $\emptyset$  has Y      ‘(at some place) Y is available’
- >  $\emptyset$  has Y      ‘(at some place) there is Y’

The crucial move in the emergence of have-ILP constructions is the routinization of the expression of availability at some place by means of an impersonalized variant of the transpossessionive construction. Krio *den get*, lit. ‘they have’, African American English *dey got*, lit. ‘they have’ (cf. (43) above), and Jamaican *yu gat*, lit. ‘you have’ (all from English *get*) are particularly suggestive, since they include third person plural or second person expletives, and cross-linguistically, third person plural and second person pronouns are commonly used to express non-specific reference to humans.

Such constructions initially express possession by a non-specific possessor, which favors the development of readings in which the availability of an entity at some place is more prominent than possession by virtual possessors located at the place in question. In other words, in an impersonalized transpossessionive construction, reference to a place at which some entity is available tends to become more prominent than reference to an unspecified possessor. The impersonalized transpossessionive construction may thus become the usual expression of availability of an entity at some place, even if the entity in question is not a typically possessed entity.

In a second move, the use of the impersonalized transpossessionive construction may extend to the expression of episodic presence of an entity at some place, qualifying thus as an ILP construction. In other words, it seems reasonable to conceive the expression of permanent presence at some place as an intermediate stage in the conversion of an impersonalized transpossessionive construction into an ILP construction.

### 3.4.4. Have-ILP constructions in the languages of the world

Have-ILP constructions are common in Central and Southern Europe:<sup>16</sup>

Albanian (Newmark *et al.* 1982)

Alemannic (Cztinglar 2002)

Bulgarian (pers.doc)

Calabrese and other Italo-Romance varieties (Cruschina 2015, Ciconte 2013, Bentley *et al.* 2013, 2015)<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Other historical scenarios resulting in the emergence of have-ILP constructions can be imagined, but I am aware of no concrete case of a have-ILP construction showing evidence of a historical development other than the impersonalization of a transpossessionive construction.

<sup>15</sup>  $\emptyset$  refers here to any formal operation (deletion, use of an expletive pronoun, or others) indicating that the possessor must be interpreted as non-specific.

<sup>16</sup> In Polish and Romanian, the availability of the Have-I/P constructions is limited to negative clauses.

Greek (pers.doc.)

Polish (pers.doc.)

Romanian (Lombard 1974)

Moreover, contrary to the still widespread opinion that transitive verbs of possession, and consequently have-ILP constructions, are rare (if not totally inexistent) outside of Europe,<sup>18</sup> transitive verbs of possession and have-ILP constructions are not rare in the languages of the world.

In West Africa, have-ILP constructions are particularly common in the Atlantic family:

Fula (Creissels *et al.* 2015)

Joola (Creissels *et al.* 2015)

Lehar aka Laala (Creissels *et al.* 2015)

Mankanya (pers.doc.)

Ndut (Morgan 1996)

Nyun (Creissels *et al.* 2015)

Pepel (Creissels *et al.* 2015)

Saafi (Mbodj 1983)

Seereer (Creissels *et al.* 2015)

Wolof (Creissels *et al.* 2015)

Have-ILP construction are also very common in a vast region of Mainland South East Asia including Sinitic languages (Mandarin, Cantonese, etc.), Tai-Kadai languages, Hmong-Mien languages, most Mon-Khmer languages (Vietnamese – cf. (39) above –, Cambodian, etc.), and some Tibeto-Burman and Austronesian languages. The use of the same predicators in possessive and inverse-locational predication has long been recognized as an areal feature of the languages spoken in this area, but in the typological literature, the received view is that the predicators in question are purely ‘existential’ predicators also found in possessive clauses belonging to Stassen’s ‘Topic Possessive’ type. In fact, as shown in Chappell & Creissels (2019), to which the reader is referred for a detailed discussion, the languages of this area have possessive clauses of the transpossession type, and most of them have an ILP construction belonging to the have-ILP type of inverse-locational predication.<sup>19</sup>

Pidgins and Creoles constitute a fourth group of languages characterized by a strong predominance of have-ILP constructions. Out of the 75 Pidgin and Creole varieties represented in the Atlas of Pidgin and Creole Language Structures (Michaelis *et al.* 2013), 41 have a have-ILP construction. Interestingly, in this sample, have-ILP constructions are found in 19 out of the 26 Pidgin and Creole varieties whose lexifier language is English, i.e. a language which does not have this type of ILP construction.

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<sup>17</sup> Have-ILP constructions were more widespread in early Italo-Romance varieties than in their descendants, characterized by a strong predominance of there-be-ILP constructions, cf. Bentley *et al.* (2013, 2015).

<sup>18</sup> The origin of this opinion can be traced back to the theory of language change elaborated in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by Indo-Europeanists such as Meillet (1924).

<sup>19</sup> In some of the languages spoken in this area, the ‘have’ verb is also found in locational predication regardless of a distinction between plain and inverse locational predication. According to the definitions adopted in the present article, such languages do not have a have-ILP construction, and must rather be characterized as using the same verbs as copulas in GLP constructions and as ‘have’ verbs in transpossession constructions – see section 4.2.4.

Outside of these four groups of languages, I also have identified the have-ILP type in the following languages:

Daba (Afroasiatic, Chadic; Lienhard 1978)  
 Igbo (Niger-Congo, Benue-Congo; Onumajuru 1985)  
 Langi (Benue-Congo, Bantu; Dunham 2005)  
 Maasai (Eastern Sudanic, Nilotic; Payne 2007)  
 Obolo (Niger-Congo, Benue-Congo; Rowland-Oke 2003)  
 Ostyak (Uralic; Nikolaeva 1999)  
 Palikur (Arawakan; Launey 2003)  
 Saisiyat (Austronesian, Formosan; Zeitoun *et al.* 1999)  
 Sama-Bajau (Austronesian, West Malayo-Polynesian; Jun 2005)  
 Seediq (Austronesian, Formosan; Tsukida 2005)  
 South Efate (Austronesian, Oceanic; Thieberger 2006)  
 Tennenet (Eastern Sudanic, Surmic; Randal 1998)  
 Tetun dili (Austronesian, West Malayo-Polynesian; Williams-van Klinken *et al.* 2002)  
 Ute (Uto-Aztecan; Givón 2011)

### 3.5. The *there\_have*-ILP type

#### 3.5.1. Definition and illustrations

*There\_have*-ILP constructions, illustrated in (1) above and (45) below, share with have-ILP constructions the use of a predicator also found in a transpossession construction, and with *there\_be*-ILP constructions the presence of a locative expletive.

(45) Occitan (pers.knowl.)

*I            a        un    can    dins    l'òrt.*  
 there<sub>expl</sub>   has   a        dog    in        the garden  
 'There is a dog in the garden.'

The inverse-locational predicator of French *il y a* belongs to this type, but in addition to the locative expletive (*y*) and a third person singular form of *avoir* 'have', it includes an expletive subject clitic of third person masculine (*il*).

#### 3.5.2. *There\_have*-ILP constructions in the languages of the world

This is a very rare type. Five of the seven languages in which I have found it belong to the Romance family:<sup>20</sup> Catalan, French, Occitan, Sardinian (Jones 1993), and Calabrian (Bentley & Cruschina 2016, Bentley 2017). The other two are a Bantu language (Kagulu; Petzell 2008) and a mixed language with Bantu and Cushitic elements (Ma'a/Mbugu; Mous 2003).

<sup>20</sup> Historically, the present form *hay* of Spanish *haber* 'there be' originates from such a construction, since it can be decomposed as *ha* third person singular of *haber* plus the reflex *-y* of a locative expletive, but synchronically, *hay* can only be analyzed as the irregular present form of a specialized inverse-locational verb, since in Spanish, *haber* has been completely replaced by *tener* (< *tenere* 'hold') in the expression of possession.



### 3.6. The incorporated-figure-ILP type

#### 3.6.1. Definition and illustrations

Incorporated-figure-ILP constructions are found in some of the languages that have the incorporated-possessee type of predicative possession, and can be analyzed as resulting from the impersonalization of the propriative verbs found in this type of predicative possession.

For example, Kalaallisut (aka West Greenlandic) has a suffix *-qar* converting nouns into intransitive propriative verbs assigning the role of possessor to their argument, encoded as a noun phrase in the absolutive case and cross-referenced on the verb, as in (22) above. In the corresponding ILP construction, a propriative verb derived from the noun referring to the figure is invariably in the third person singular, and no absolutive noun phrase is present – example (46).

- (46) Kalaallisut (Van Geenhoven 1998: 27)
- |                           |                    |                       |
|---------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Nillataartarfim-mi</i> | <i>tallima-nik</i> | <i>manne-qar-puq.</i> |
| fridge-LOC                | five-INSTR.PL      | egg-PROPR-IND.3SG     |
- ‘There are five eggs in the fridge.’

Tagalog is another case in point, although the recognition of a have-ILP construction in Tagalog is less obvious, since a superficial look at Tagalog inverse-locational and possessive clauses, as in (47), may suggest analyzing rather (47a) as a transpossessionive construction in which *may* would be a verb ‘have’ rather than a propriative operator.

- (47) Tagalog (Naylor 2005: 419)
- |    |            |             |            |              |
|----|------------|-------------|------------|--------------|
| a. | <i>May</i> | <i>pera</i> | <i>ang</i> | <i>bata.</i> |
|    | PROPR      | money       | NOM        | child        |
- ‘The child has money.’
- |    |            |            |           |               |
|----|------------|------------|-----------|---------------|
| b. | <i>May</i> | <i>tao</i> | <i>sa</i> | <i>bahay.</i> |
|    | PROPR      | person     | LOC       | house         |
- ‘There is someone in the house.’

However, *may* cannot be analyzed as a verb ‘have’, since in Tagalog, as illustrated in (48), both arguments of a transitive verb must be introduced by a proclitic case marker.

- (48) Tagalog (Naylor 2005: 427)
- |               |               |             |            |               |
|---------------|---------------|-------------|------------|---------------|
| <i>Nabali</i> | <i>n(an)g</i> | <i>bata</i> | <i>ang</i> | <i>sanga.</i> |
| broke         | GEN           | child       | NOM        | branch        |
- ‘The child broke the branch.’

In the transitive construction of Tagalog, one of the two core arguments must be marked by *ang* (commonly designated as ‘nominative’) and the other one by *n(an)g* (genitive). Moreover, the choice of the nominative-marked argument is correlated to the choice of an obligatory voice marker included in the verb form. By contrast, in the possessive construction, *may* includes no voice marker, and no case marker accompanies the noun representing the possessee, which consequently cannot be analyzed as the nucleus of a noun phrase in a two-place predicative construction. Consequently, *may* is best viewed as a propriative operator converting the noun it precedes into a monovalent predicate glossable as ‘be an N-owner’,

which implies analyzing the ILP construction in (47b) as an incorporated-figure-ILP construction.

### 3.6.2. *Incorporated-figure-ILP constructions in the languages of the world*

Incorporated-possessee constructions are not rare in the languages of the world. They are particularly common among Amerindian languages. However, in the documentation I have gathered, ILP constructions with the figure treated like the possessee in an incorporated-possessee construction are attested only in the following languages:

Kalaallisut aka West Greenlandic (Eskimo-Aleut, Eskimo; Van Geenhoven 1998)

Kolya Yukaghir (Yukaghir; Maslova 2003a)

Ngalakan (Arnhem; Merlan 1983)

Shoshone (Uto-Aztecan; Shaul 2012)

Tagalog (Austronesian, West Malayo-Polynesian; Naylor 2005)

Yup'ik (Eskimo-Aleut, Eskimo; Miyaoka 2012)

### 3.7. *The be\_with-ILP type*

#### 3.7.1. *Definition and illustrations*

Be\_with-ILP constructions are ILP constructions with the figure encoded like comitative adjuncts in verbal predication or like the companion phrase in comitative predication. The languages where they are found have the comitative-possessee type of predicative possession.

In (49a), a locative class marker occupies the position normally occupied by a subject index referring to an individual whose relationship to a companion is predicated, or to a possessor, as in (49b).

(49) Swahili (Niger-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantu; pers.doc.)

- a. *Ku na mgeni nyumba-ni.*  
CL17 with NP1.stranger NP9.home-LOC  
'There is a stranger at home.'  
lit. 'There (is) with stranger at home.'
- b. *Mwalimu a na wanafunzi wengi.*  
NP1.teacher CL1 with NP2.student CL2.many  
'The teacher has many students.'  
lit. 'Teacher he (is) with many students.'

Example (50) illustrates the use of the Hausa comitative preposition *dà* with comitative or instrumental adjuncts (a), in possessive predication (b), and in the function of inverse-locational predicator (c).

(50) Hausa (Afroasiatic, Chadic; Newman 2000: 467, 178)

- a. *Yā yankā dà wukā.*  
3SG.M.CPL slaughter with knife  
'He slaughtered it with a knife.'
- b. *Yārō yanā dà fensir̃.*  
boy 3SG.M.ICPL with pencil  
lit. 'The boy is with pencil.' → 'The boy has a pencil.'

- c. *Dà isasshen shāyì?*  
 with enough tea  
 ‘Is there enough tea?’

### 3.7.2. *Be\_with-ILP constructions in the languages of the world*

In the documentation I have gathered, *be\_with-ILP* constructions are attested in the Bantu sub-branch of the Benue-Congo family (they are found in 36 out of the 100 Bantu languages that constitute the sample analyzed by Devos *et al.* 2019) and to a lesser extent in the Chadic branch of Afro-Asiatic (3 out of the 14 Chadic languages included in Creissels’ (2019a) sample of languages of the Sudanic belt), but are almost completely unattested elsewhere: Santome Creole (Ferraz 1979) is the only attestation I have found outside Bantu and Chadic.

It is reasonable to think that *be\_with-ILP* constructions derive historically from comitative-possessee constructions in the same way as *have-ILP* constructions from transpossession constructions (see section 3.4.3), and Bantu and Chadic are precisely two language families in which comitative-possessee constructions are common. However, the data I have gathered include no attestation of *be\_with-ILP* constructions in some other groups of languages in which the comitative-possessee type of predicative construction is also relatively common, such as Ubangian, Central Sudanic, Papuan languages, or Australian languages.

## 3.8. *The it\_be-ILP type*

### 3.8.1. *Definition and illustrations*

*It\_be-ILP* constructions are formally similar to identificational predication. They involve either a specialized identificational predicator, or an identificational/locational predicator accompanied by a non-locative expletive also used in identificational clauses equivalent to English *This/that is an N*.

(51) Icelandic (Indo-European, Neijmann 2001, Freeze 2001)

- a. *Það er kirkja.*  
 that is church  
 ‘That is a church.’
- b. *Það eru mys í baðkerinu.*  
 that are mice in bathtub  
 ‘There are mice in the bathtub.’ lit. ‘That are mice in the bathtub.’

This type of ILP construction is interesting theoretically, since it emphasizes the semantic relationship between inverse-locational and identificational predication: in some sense, the perspective on figure-ground relationships expressed by ILP constructions is tantamount to identifying an entity present at a given place. This connection is particularly obvious in Tahitian (Polynesian). In most Polynesian languages, ILP constructions involve a locative expletive or a specialized inverse-locational predicator that historically derives from a locative expletive, but Tahitian uses the identificational predicator *e* in a construction whose literal meaning is ‘That at/of *Loc* is *N*’. (52a) illustrates the Tahitian identificational predication, and (52b-c) illustrate the two variants of the ILP construction. In both variants, the word glossed ART(icle) can be viewed as marking the nominalization of a prepositional phrase.

(52) Tahitian (Lazard & Peltzer 2000: 36-45)

- a. *E fa'ehau terā ta'ata.*  
ECOP soldier DEM man  
'This man is a soldier.'
- b. *E pape te-i terā vāhi.*  
ECOP water ART-at DEM place  
'There is water there.' lit. 'It is water, that at that place.'
- c. *E pape te-o terā vāhi.*  
ECOP water ART-of DEM place  
'There is water there.' lit. 'It is water, that of that place.'

### 3.8.2. *It-be-ILP constructions in the languages of the world*

Apart from Icelandic and Tahitian, the only attestations of this type I am aware of are as follows:

African American English (English-based Creole, cf. Labov 1973: 270)

Friulan (Indo-European, Romance; Cruschina 2015)

Norwegian (Indo-European, Germanic; Gast & Haas 2011)

Surselvan and other Romansh varieties (Indo-European, Romance, cf. Benincà & Haiman 2005: 165-167)

Swedish (Indo-European, Germanic; Czinglar 2002)

### 3.9. *ILP constructions involving specialized inverse-locational predicators*

#### 3.9.1. *Definition and illustrations*

Specialized inverse-locational predicators are words or clitics constituting the distinctive element of ILP constructions that cannot be analyzed synchronically as resulting from the addition of a locative expletive to the corresponding PLP construction, or from impersonalization of a possessive construction with the possessor in A or S role.

According to this definition, predicators shared by inverse-locational and possessive predication can be analyzed as specialized inverse-locational predicators if they occur in a possessive construction with the possessee encoded like the figure in inverse-locational predication, and non-core marking of the possessor (in which case their possessive use can be viewed as an extension of the ILP construction), but not if their possessive use meets the definition of the transpossessive or S-possessor types of predicative possession (in which case their inverse-locational use is best viewed as an extension of the possessive construction).

Example (53) illustrates the contrast between inverse-locational predication involving a specialized predicator and plain-locational predication in Turkish.

(53) Turkish (pers.doc.)

- a. *Kitap masa-da(-dır).*  
book table-LOC(-be)  
'The book is on the table.'
- b. *Masa-da bir kitap var.*  
table-LOC one book ILP  
'There is a book on the table.'

### 3.9.2. The origin of specialized inverse-locational predicators

Historically, specialized inverse-locational predicators may emerge from any type of ILP construction as the result of changes that blur the relationship between the ILP construction and its source construction.

Serbo-Croat *ima* ‘there is’ illustrates the case of a have-ILP construction undergoing changes that convert it into an ILP construction involving a specialized inverse-locational predicator. Historically, *ima* is the third person singular of *imati* ‘have’, but the coding of the figure in the construction of *ima* ‘there is’ has ceased to be aligned with that of the possessee in the construction of *ima* ‘he/she has’. Example (54) shows that, in the singular, the zero (‘nominative’) marking of the figure in the inverse-locational use of *ima* contrasts with the accusative marking of the possessee in the possessive construction.

(54) Serbo-Croat (Creissels 2013: 467-468)

- a. *Ima jedna krčma u planini.*  
 ILP one.SG.F inn.SG in mountain.SG.PREP  
 ‘There is an inn in the mountain.’ (title of a song)
- b. *Ima jednu krčmu u planini.*  
 have.PRS.3SG one.SG.F.ACC inn.SG.ACC in mountain.SG.PREP  
 ‘(S)he has an inn in the mountain.’

This change probably started with the reanalysis of accusative forms homonymous with the nominative. Note that, in spite of the possibility of nominative marking, the figure NP in the Serbo-Croat ILP construction cannot be analyzed as an inverted subject, since in the plural, the verb does not show plural agreement, and the genitive is obligatory in conditions in which intransitive subjects (even in postverbal position) are in the nominative – example (55b).

(55) Serbo-Croat (Creissels 2013: 467-468)

- a. *Ima lijepa djevojka u ovoj kući.*  
 ILP pretty.SG.F girl.SG in this.SG.F.PREP house.SG.PREP  
 ‘There is a pretty girl in this house.’
- b. *Ima lijepih djevojaka u ovom selu.*  
 ILP pretty.PL.GEN girl.PL.GEN in this.SG.N.PREP village.SG.PREP  
 ‘There are pretty girls in this village.’

The case of a specialized inverse-locational predicator resulting from a change in the transpossession construction from which it originates can be illustrated by Spanish *haber*. The use of *haber* in inverse-locational predication developed from its use as a ‘have’ verb, and no change has affected the ILP construction with *haber*. What occurred is that *haber* has been replaced by *tener* in the function of possessive predicator, which automatically converted *haber* into a specialized inverse-locational predicator – example (56).

(56) Spanish (pers.knowl.)

- a. *Había un problema muy grave.*  
 ILP.IMPF.3SG a problem very serious  
 ‘There was a very serious problem.’

- b. *Tenía un problema muy grave.*  
 have.IMPF.3SG a problem very serious  
 ‘He/she had a very serious problem.’

In Portuguese, the same evolution resulted in the conversion of *haver* into a specialized inverse-locational predicator, but in Portuguese (especially in Brazilian Portuguese), a new ILP construction is emerging with *tem* (third person singular of the new transitive verb of possession *ter*) in the role of inverse-locational predicator, and it is interesting to observe that this construction already departs from the possessive construction from which it originates in the coding of the figure phrase, since personal pronouns in the ILP construction do not take the accusative form required for transitive patients, e.g., *tem eu* ‘there is me’ (Delia Bentley, pers.com.).

Evolutions affecting locational predication are probably a major cause of the emergence of specialized inverse-locational predicators. For example, Old Russian had a verb ‘be’ that became optional in the present, except in typical inverse-locational contexts, hence the emergence of a specialized inverse-locational predicator *jest’* (neg. *net*) which is historically the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular of the present of *byt’* ‘be’ (cf. Latin *est*). In Modern Russian, the use of *jest’* is very marginal in plain-locational and identificational predication, whereas *jest’* has been maintained as an inverse-locational predicator. By contrast, in the past, ‘be’ has been maintained in plain-locational and identificational predication, and consequently no specialized inverse-locational predicator has emerged – example (57).

(57) Russian (pers.knowl.)

- a. *Derevnja za goroj.*  
 village behind hill.INSTR  
 ‘The village is behind the hill.’
- b. *Za goroj est’ derevnja.*  
 behind hill.INSTR ILP village  
 ‘There is a village behind the hill.’
- c. *Derevnja byla za goroj.*  
 village be.PST.SG.F behind hill.INSTR  
 ‘The village was behind the hill.’
- d. *Za goroj byla derevnja.*  
 behind hill.INSTR be.PST.SG.F village  
 ‘There was a village behind the hill.’

A similar situation is found in Erzya (Uralic, Modvinic; Turunen 2010) and Udmurt (Uralic, Permic; Winkler 2001).

In the data I have gathered, some specialized inverse-locational predicators seem to originate from the combination of a locational predicator with an additional element whose origin is, however, unclear. This is the case for Ese Ejja (Takanan; Vuillermet 2012), Mari (Uralic, Permic; Zorina *et al.* 1990), and Kurmandji Kurdish (Iranian; Blau & Barak 1999).<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> According to Geoffrey Heath (pers.com.), there is no consensus about the origin of the element *he-* that distinguishes the inverse-locational predicator *hebûn* from the copula *bûn* in Kurdish, but “one reasonably plausible suggestion is to connect it to the postposed demonstrative element *ha(n)*, which is quite similar to German postposed particle *da* in things like *das Buch da* ‘that book (there)’.”

### *3.9.3. Specialized inverse-locational predicators in the languages of the world*

Specialized inverse-locational predicators are widespread in the world's languages. However, it is possible that a better knowledge of some of the languages which I classified as having this type of ILP construction would have led me to identify another type, and vice versa. For example, the inverse-locational predicator of several Oceanic languages seems to be cognate with the locative expletives found in other Oceanic languages, but the sources do not discuss the possibility of such an etymology and its relevance for synchronic description.

The following list is just a selection intended to illustrate the pervasiveness of specialized inverse-locational predicators across continents and language families:

Anywa (Nilo-Saharan, Eastern Sudanic; Reh 1993)  
several Arabic varieties (Iraqi, Moroccan, etc.; Afro-Asiatic, Semitic; Creissels 2019b)  
Baraïn (Afro-Asiatic, Chadic; Lovestrand 2012)  
Basari (Niger-Congo, Atlantic; Loïc Perrin, pers.com.)  
Breton (Indo-European, Celtic; Trepos 1968)  
Cebuano (Austronesian, Philippine; Dryer 2007)  
Chalcatongo Mixtec (Oto-Manguean; Macaulay 1996)  
Chuvash (Turkic; Clark 1998)  
Coptic (Afro-Asiatic, Egyptian; Walters 1972)  
Deme (Nilo-Saharan, Central Sudanic; Palayer 2006)  
Eastern Armenian (Indo-European; Gabirjan & Gabirjan 1970)  
Fagauvea (Austronesian, Polynesian; Djoupa 2013)  
Fon (Niger-Congo, Kwa; Lefebvre & Brousseau 2002)  
Forest Enets (Uralic, Samoyedic; Siegl 2013)  
Dime (Afro-Asiatic, Omotic; Seyoum 2008)  
Huastec (Mayan; Kondić 2012)  
Imbabura Quechua (Quechuan; Cole 1985)  
Kanuri (Saharan; Cyffer 1993)  
Karo Batak (Austronesian, West Malayo-Polynesian; Woollams 2005)  
Ket (Yeniseic; Vajda 2004)  
Kwaza (isolate, Brazil; Van der Voort 2004)  
Limbu (Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Kiranti; Van Driem 1987)  
Louisiana Creole (Klingler 2003)  
Mosetén (isolate, Bolivia; Sakel 2003)  
Nheengatú (Tupi-Guarani; Da Cruz 2011)  
Nivaçle (Mataguayan; Payne *et al.* 2018; Fabre 2016)  
Pashto (Indo-European, Iranian; David 2014)  
Pilagá (Guaycuruan; Payne *et al.* 2018)  
Shipibo-Conibo (Panoan; Valenzuela 1998)  
Tobelo (West Papuan; Holton 2003)  
Tupuri (Niger-Congo, Adamawa; Ruelland 1992)  
Ugaritic (Semitic; Sivan 2001)  
Xamtanga (Afro-Asiatic, Cushitic; Darmon 2015)  
Yao (Niger-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantu; Devos *et al.* 2019)  
Yine aka Piro (Arawakan; Hanson 2010)

etc.

### 3.10. Optional ILP constructions, and ILP constructions of limited availability

In some languages, the construction used in typical plain-locational contexts can equally be used even in the most typical inverse-locational contexts, qualifying thus as a GLP construction, but there is also a specialized ILP construction. For example, in Jóola Fóoñi (Niger-Congo, Atlantic), the construction illustrated in (58a-b) (which only differ in the definiteness marking of the figure phrase) can be analyzed as a GLP construction, but Jóola Fóoñi also has a specialized ILP construction of the have ILP-type, illustrated in (58c).

(58) Jóola Fóoñi (pers.doc.)

- a. *ɛ-wɛla-a-y*      *y-ɔɔ-yɔ*      *dɪ*      *bɔ-son-a-b*  
 SG-snake-D-CLe    CLe-LCOP-CLe    in    SG-hole-D-CLb  
 ‘The snake is in the hole.’
- b. *ɛ-wɛla*      *y-ɔɔ-yɔ*      *dɪ*      *bɔ-son-a-b*  
 SG-snake    CLe-LCOP-CLe    in    SG-hole-D-CLb  
 ‘There is a snake in the hole.’
- c. *Baj-ɛ*      *ɛ-wɛla*      *dɪ*      *bɔ-son-a-b*  
 have-CPL    SG-snake    in    SG-hole-D-CLb  
 ‘There is a snake in the hole.’

In other languages, the use of a specialized ILP construction is conditioned by grammatical features such as tense or polarity. The case of Russian has been mentioned in section 2.4. In Serbo-Croat (example (59)), the use of the inverse-locational predicator *ima* is restricted to the present. In other tenses, locational predication with *biti* ‘be’ is the only possible option for clauses corresponding to *ima*-clauses in the present.

(59) Serbo-Croat (pers.doc.)

- a. *Još ima dobrih ljudi.*  
 still ILP.3SG good.PL.GEN person.PL.GEN  
 ‘There are still good people.’
- b. *Bilo je dobrih i loših dana.*  
 be.PST.SG.N AUX.3SG good.PL.GEN and bad.PL.GEN day.PL.GEN  
 ‘There were some good and bad days.’

In Polish, the have-ILP construction is restricted to negative clauses in the present tense – example (60). In the present positive, and in other tenses irrespective of polarity, there is no possible contrast between locational predication with *być* ‘be’ and an ILP construction.

(60) Polish (pers.doc.)

- a. *Są jeszcze wolne miejsca.*  
 be.PRS.3PL still free.PL place.PL  
 ‘There are still some seats left.’



- b. *Nie ma już wolnych miejsc.*  
 NEG have.PRS.3SG already free.PL.GEN place.PL.GEN  
 ‘There are no seats left.’
- c. *Nie było już nikogo.*  
 NEG be.PST.SG.N already nobody.GEN  
 ‘There was nobody left.’

A similar configuration is found in Romanian, where the use of an ILP-construction of the have-ILP type is possible only in negative clauses (Lombard 1974: 273).

#### 4. Alignment relationships between plain-locational, inverse-locational, and possessive predication

##### 4.1. Introductory remarks

The *it-be-ILP* type is not considered in this section, because putting forward generalizations about the possible alignment relationships involving this type would not make much sense, given the very low number of languages in which it is attested. The situation is different with the other relatively rare types (the *there-have-ILP* and *incorporated-figure-ILP* types), since in term of alignment, they clearly pattern like the *have-ILP* type.

Seven types of alignment patterns between plain-locational, inverse-locational and possessive predication can be found in the languages of the world: four in the languages that have a GLP construction or an ILP construction of the *there-be-ILP* type, one in languages with ILP constructions of the *have-ILP*, *there-have-ILP*, *incorporated-figure-ILP*, or *be-with-ILP* type, and two in languages with specialized inverse-locational predicators.

##### 4.2. Languages with a GLP construction or with an ILP construction of the *there-be-ILP* type

Two distinct types of alignment pattern are particularly common among the languages with a GLP construction, or with an ILP construction of the *there-be-ILP* type. They are presented in sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2. The types presented in sections 4.2.3. and 4.2.4 are much less common, but cannot be considered exceptional either.

##### 4.2.1. Languages with a GLP or an ILP construction of the *there-be-ILP* type, and a predicative possession construction of the *S-possessee* type

In this configuration, the possessee in predicative possession is aligned with the figure in locational predication. As a rule, the same copula is used in locational and possessive constructions, as in (61).

(61) Bambara (pers.doc.)

- a. *Sékù bé sùgû lá.*  
 Sékou LCOP market.D at  
 ‘Sékou is at the market.’
- b. *Wùlú lè bé bôn kónó.*  
 dog.D FOC LCOP room.D in  
 ‘There is a dog in the room.’

- or ‘THE DOG is in the room.’
- c. *Wùlù békékù bólo.*  
 dog.D LCOP Sékou PSPH  
 ‘Sékou has a dog.’  
 lit. ‘A dog is in Sékou’s sphere.’

(62) illustrates a variant of this pattern with flexible constituent order in locational predication, and (63) illustrates a variant with an expletive locative in inverse-locational predication.

(62) Estonian (Lehiste 1969)

- a. *Raamat on laual.*  
 book be.PRS.3SG table.ADESS  
 ‘The book is on the table.’
- b. *Laual on raamat.*  
 table.ADESS be.PRS.3SG book  
 ‘There is a book on the table.’
- b. *Isal on raamat.*  
 father.ADESS be.PRS.3SG book  
 ‘Father has a book.’

(63) Standard Arabic (Aziz 1995, Ambros 1969: 89)

- a. *Ar-rajulu fī-l-maktabi.*  
 D-man in-D-office.GEN  
 ‘The man is in the office.’
- b. *Hunāka rajulu-n fī-l-maktabi.*  
 there<sub>expl</sub> man-INDEF in-D-office.GEN  
 ‘There is a man in the office.’
- b. *ġinda l-muġallimi sayyāratu-n.*  
 beside D-teacher.GEN car-INDEF  
 ‘The teacher has a car.’

I have found the following exceptions to the rule according to which, in this configuration, the copula used in locational predication is also found in predicative possession: Quechua, Kartvelian languages, and North West Caucasian languages.

In Quechua, the predicator used in predicative possession is the applicative form of the locational verb *tiya-* (whose original meaning is ‘sit’) – example (64).

(64) Cochabamba Quechua (Quechuan; Myler 2016: 184)

- Juan-pata pana tiya-pu-n.*  
 Juan-GEN sister be-APPL-3SG  
 ‘Juan has a sister.’

Georgian (Kartvelian) has two verbs of possession (depending on the animacy of the possessee) distinct from the verb ‘be’ found in equative and locational predication. However, the coding frame of the verbs of possession (nominative-marked possessee and dative-marked

possessor irrespective of the tense value expressed by the verb) does not show the case alternations that characterize transitive predication in Georgian, and the alignment pattern is basically the same as in the other languages examined in this section, in spite of the use of distinct predicators in predicative possession.

(65) Georgian (Kartvelian; pers.doc.)

- a. *C'igni magida-ze aris.*  
book table-on be.PRS.3SG  
'The book is on the table.'
- b. *Magida-ze c'igni aris.*  
table-on book be.PRS.3SG  
'There is a book on the table.'
- c. *Vano-s axali megobari hq'av.*  
Vano-DAT new friend be\_in-possession.PRS.3SG.3SG  
'Vano has a new friend.'

*4.2.2. Languages with a GLP or an ILP construction of the there\_be-ILP type, and a predicative possession construction of the transpossessionive type with a 'have' verb distinct from the locational copula*

The second well-attested possibility is that a distinct predicator is found in possessive predication, and possessive predication belongs to the transpossessionive type, as in (66).<sup>22</sup>

(66) Romanian (pers.doc.)

- a. *Studentii sunt în clasă.*  
student.PL.D be.PRS.3PL in classroom  
'The students are in the classroom.'
- b. *Sunt niște studenți în clasă.*  
be.PRS.3PL some student.PL in classroom  
'There are some students in the classroom.'
- c. *Avem o casă în București.*  
have.PRS.1PL a house in Bucharest.  
'We have a house in Bucharest.'

*4.2.3. Languages with a GLP or an ILP construction of the there\_be ILP type, and a predicative possession construction of the comitative-possessee type*

A third possibility is that predicative possession belongs to the comitative-possessee type, as in Lingala (Niger-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantu) – example (67).<sup>23</sup> The same copula is used in all constructions, as in the pattern examined in 4.2.1, but the alignment relationship is different, since the term of predicative possession aligned with the figure in locational predication is the possessor.

<sup>22</sup> Note that, in negative clauses, Romanian also has an ILP construction of the have-ILP type.

<sup>23</sup> In Lingala, the same preposition *na* is found in locative and comitative function, but this is not general in the languages that have this configuration – compare with (68).

(67) Lingala (Bwantsa-Kafungu 1982: 22, 35, 91)

- a. *Tatá a-zalí na ndáko.*  
father 3SG.H-be.PRS at house  
'Father is at home.'
- b. *Moto mókó a-zalí tē.*  
person one 3SG.H-be.PRS NEG  
'There is nobody here.'
- c. *Moníngá nangái a-zalí na mwási tē.*  
friend my 3SG.H-be.PRS with woman NEG  
'My friend doesn't have a wife.'

(68) illustrates the same configuration with constructions involving no overt copula.

(68) Baka (Ubangian; Djoupée 2017: 119, 120, 236)

- a. *Né mó ʔà bálá? nǒó ʔèé mó dé.*  
what there LOC camp INDEF thing there NEG  
'What is there at the camp? There is nothing else.'
- b. *Ngé, wósè, ngó té jí-è wó jò ʔà ndá.*  
3SG.EMPH woman 3PL with mother-3SG 3PL there LOC house  
'She, the woman, and his mother, they are there in the house.'
- c. *Kǒmbé má té mbà.*  
FUT 1S with knife  
'I'll have a knife.' lit. 'I'll be with knife.'

#### 4.2.4. Languages using the same verbs in a transpossession construction and in a GLP construction

In this configuration, the same verb has a transitive use in which it assigns the role of possessor to its A argument (and the role of possessee to its P argument), and an intransitive use in a GLP construction with the figure in the role of S. In other words, in the languages in which a grammatical relation 'subject' conflating transitive A and intransitive S can be recognized, an alternative characterization of this pattern is that the same verb can be used transitively as a 'have' verb with the possessor in subject role, and intransitively as a general locational copula with the figure in S role. In the presentation of the examples, such verbs are glossed 'be/have'.

For example, in Qiang languages (Tibeto-Burman), verbal predication involves indexation of the S/A argument (69a-b), and S, A and P NPs are equally unflagged. The same verbs are used as general locational predicators and in possessive predication (69c-e). As can be expected, in locational predication, the indexed argument is the figure (69c-d). In the possessive use of the same verbs, the possessor and possessee NPs are equally unflagged, but the indexed argument is the possessor (69e), which unambiguously shows that the construction must be analyzed as belonging to the transpossession type.

(69) Puxi Qiang (Tibeto-Burman, Qiangic; Huang 2004: 93, 94)

- a. *ŋa xa-bʒi-si.*  
1SG:TOP DIR-big-CSM:1  
'I grew up.'

- b. *ŋa t<sup>h</sup>ala ʃe˧˥.*  
 1SG:TOP 3SG beat:1  
 ‘I am beating him/her.’
- c. *ŋa tso zə˧˥.*  
 1SG:TOP here be/have:1  
 ‘I am here.’
- d. *tɕi ʃkueʃkue-ta dzua zə.*  
 house around-LOC army be/have  
 ‘There is a team of soldiers around the house.’
- e. *ŋa tsutsu a-la zə˧˥.*  
 1SG:TOP younger\_brother one-CLF be/have:1  
 ‘I have a younger brother.’  
 (Huang 2004: 93, 94)

Mainland South East Asia seems to be the only area where this configuration is relatively common. Within the sample of South East Asian languages analyzed by Chappell & Lü (*to appear*), it is mainly found in Tibeto-Burman (Jingpho, Tujia, and several languages belonging to the Lolo-Burmese, Qiangic and Karenic branches of Tibeto-Burman), but also in two Austroasiatic languages (Bugan and Mang), in one Hmongic language (Yanghao), and in three Sinitic languages (Hainan Southern Min, Linxia and Dabu Hakka). Moreover, in four varieties of Bai (a language whose classification as a Sinitic language or a highly sinicized Tibeto-Burman language is unclear), the same verb is used not only as a ‘have’ verb and a locational copula, but also as an equative copula.

Outside of Mainland South East Asia, the only languages in which I have found this configuration are Indonesian (Austronesian; Sneddon 1996), Dii Indo-Portuguese (Creole; Cardoso 2009), Gulf Pidgin Arabic (Bakir 2014), Iatmul and Manambu (two Papuan languages of the Ndu family; Jendraschek 2012, Aikhenvald 2008), and Akan (Kwa; Boadi 1971, Redden & Owusu 1995).

Interestingly, the data from Mainland South East Asia provided by Chappell & Lü (*to appear*) point to two distinct diachronic scenarios as potential sources of this configuration, and yet a third possibility is suggested by the Iatmul data.

In some of the South East Asian languages that use the same verbs as ‘have’ verbs and as locational copulas in a GLP construction, the verbs in question also have intransitive uses as posture verbs or with meanings such as ‘dwell’ or ‘stick’. It seems plausible that this was their original meaning, and they first acquired the function of locational copula in a GLP predication also used to encode predicative possession, in a configuration of the type presented in 4.2.1. Subsequently, the predicative possession construction underwent a have-drift process by which routinization of possessor topicalization and deletion of the oblique flagging that initially characterized possessor phrases allowed for the reinterpretation of the possessor phrase as the A term of a transitive predication.

In other languages, the verbs used as ‘have’ verbs and as locational copulas in a GLP construction also have transitive uses with meanings such as ‘take’. This is in particular the case for the Qiang verb *zə* in example (69) above. In such cases, the reasonable hypothesis is that a ‘take’ verb was first converted into a ‘have’ verb, according to a scenario particularly well-attested in various branches of Indo-European. Subsequently, a have-ILP construction

developed according to the scenario sketched in section 3.4.3, and finally, the have-ILP construction was reanalyzed as a GLP construction.

Iatmul (Jendraschek 2012) and Manambu (Aikhenvald 2008), two closely related Papuan languages, also provide interesting data in this perspective. The verb found in Iatmul and Manambu possessive clauses (Iatmul *ti'~li'*, Manambu *tə*) is basically a posture verb 'stay' used as a locational predicator, and there is no grammaticalized ILP construction. Judging from the data provided by Aikhenvald, the possessive construction of Manambu can be analyzed as a transpossessionive construction, but the situation of Iatmul is more complex, and clearly suggests a possible development path.

In Iatmul, according to Jendraschek, three distinct constructions are possible for possessive clauses, all involving *ti'~li'* 'stay', and the most frequent one is the comitative-possessor construction illustrated in (70a). The alternative constructions are the genitive-possessor construction illustrated in (70b), and the transpossessionive construction illustrated in (70c).

(70) Iatmul (Sepik, Ndu; Jendraschek 2012: 215, 216)

- a. *Nyaan gusa okwi li'-di'*  
child paddle with be/have-3SG.M  
'The child had a paddle.' lit. 'The child stayed with a paddle.'
- b. *Wun-a saanya wugi li'-ka*  
1SG-GEN money that\_which be/have-PRS(SR)  
'I have money.' lit. 'Of me money is that which stays.'
- c. *Nyaan gusa li'-di'*  
child paddle be/have-3SG.M  
'The child had a paddle.' lit. 'The child stayed a paddle.'

Consequently, a reasonable hypothesis is that the transpossessionive construction resulted from the deletion of the comitative postposition in the comitative-possessee construction.

Interestingly, the conversion of comitative-possessive constructions into transpossessionive constructions is widely attested in Bantu languages (Creissels *to appear*), but I am aware of no Bantu language in which this evolution would have resulted in the alignment pattern found in Iatmul and Manambu.

#### 4.3. Languages with an ILP construction belonging to the have-ILP, there\_have-ILP, incorporated-figure-ILP, or be\_with-ILP type

By definition, as illustrated in (71), in the languages that have have-ILP or there\_have-ILP constructions, a predicator distinct from that found in plain locational predication is shared by inverse-locational predication and a possessive construction of the have-possessive type, and the figure in the ILP construction is encoded like the possessee in possessive predication.

(71) Bulgarian (pers.doc.)

- a. *Kotka-ta e pod masa-ta.*  
cat-D be.PRS.3SG under table-D  
'The cat is under the table.'
- b. *Ima kotka pod masa-ta.*  
have.PRS.3SG cat under table-D  
'There is a cat under the table.'

- c. *Imam kotka.*  
 have.PRS.1SG cat  
 ‘I have a cat.’

A similar alignment relationship holds for the languages that have ILP constructions of the incorporated-figure-ILP or be\_with-ILP type. The only difference is that the possessive construction belongs to the S-possessor type.

#### 4.4. Languages with specialized inverse-locational predicators

##### 4.4.1. Languages with specialized inverse-locational predicators and a possessive construction of the S-possessee type

In the configuration illustrated in (72), inverse-locational predication and predicative possession share a predicator distinct from that found in plain-locational predication, as in (71) above, but the possessive construction belongs to the S-possessee type, and can be viewed as an extension of inverse-locational predication rather than the other way round.

- (72) Turkish (pers.doc.)
- a. *Kitap masa-da(-dır).*  
 book table-LOC(-be)  
 ‘The book is on the table.’
  - b. *Masa-da bir kitap var.*  
 table-LOC one book ILP  
 ‘There is a book on the table.’
  - c. *Murat-in otomobil-i var.*  
 Murat-GEN car-CSTR ILP  
 ‘Murat has a car.’

##### 4.4.2. Languages with specialized inverse-locational predicators and a possessive construction of the transpossession type

The other possible configuration in languages with specialized inverse-locational predicators involves three distinct predicators for plain-locational, inverse-locational, and possessive predications, as in (73). In all the languages in which I have found three distinct predicators for plain-locational, inverse-locational and possessive predications, the possessive construction belongs to the transpossession type.

- (73) Spanish (pers.knowl.)
- a. *El perro está en el patio.*  
 the dog LCOP.PRS.3SG in the courtyard  
 ‘The dog is in the courtyard.’
  - b. *Hay un perro en el patio.*  
 ILP.PRS.3SG a dog in the courtyard  
 ‘There is a dog in the courtyard.’
  - c. *Mi abuela tiene un perro.*  
 my grandmother has a dog  
 ‘My grandmother has a dog.’

#### 4.5. A possible generalization

The main generalization that emerges from this enumeration of possible alignment relationships between locational predication and predicative possession is that, in the languages that have an ILP construction, predicative possession may be aligned with inverse-locational predication, but not with plain-locational predication.

### 5. Conclusion

In this article, after discussing the definition and delimitation of ILP constructions, I have distinguished several types in terms of formal affinities with other functional types of predication, and commented their distribution in the world's languages. The main conclusions are as follows:

- Probably more than half of the world's languages lack an ILP construction.
- None of the types of ILP constructions is evenly distributed across language families and areas, but two of them have a particularly wide distribution at world level: have-ILP constructions, and ILP constructions involving specialized inverse-locational predicators.
- There\_be-ILP constructions are common among Romance, Germanic, and Bantu languages, but relatively rare elsewhere.
- Be\_with-ILP constructions are relatively common among Bantu languages, and to a lesser extent among Chadic languages, but very rare elsewhere.
- The other three types (incorporated-figure-ILP, there\_have-ILP, and it\_be-ILP constructions) are rare, and show no concentration in particular areas or families.

As regards the possible alignment relationships between plain-locational, inverse-locational, and possessive predication, I have shown that seven configurations can be found in the languages of the world. In particular, the configuration in which the same verb is used in a transpossession construction and as a locational copula in a GLP construction (or in less technical terms, the possibility of using the same verb as a 'have' verb and as a 'be' verb), widely neglected in the literature, is very rare in most parts of the world but relatively common in the languages of Mainland South East Asia, and its emergence can easily be explained as resulting from sequences of historical changes which, taken individually, have nothing exceptional.

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## Abbreviations

A = the term of the basic transitive construction that represents the agent in the construction of prototypical transitive verbs; ACC = accusative; ACT = actualizer;<sup>24</sup> ADESS = adessive; AND = andative; ART = article; CL = noun class; CLF = classifier; COP = copula; CPL = completive; CSM = change-of-state marker; CSTR = construct form; D = definite, or default determiner; DAT = dative; DEM = demonstrative; DIR = directional; ECOP = equative copula; expl = expletive; F = feminine; FG = figure; FOC = focus marker; GEN = genitive; GLP = general locational predication; GR = ground; H = human; ICPL = incompletive; ILP = inverse-locational predication, or inverse-locational predictor; IMPER = imperative; IMPF = imperfect; IND = indicative; INDEF = indefinite; INF = infinitive; INSTR = instrumental; LCOP = locational copula; LOC = locative; M = masculine; N = neuter; NEG = negative; NOM = nominative; P = the term of the basic transitive construction that represents the patient in the construction of prototypical transitive verbs; PL = plural; PLP = plain-locational predication; Pred = predictor; PREP = prepositional case;<sup>25</sup> PRF = perfect; PROPR = proprietive; PRS = present; PSPH = ‘in the personal sphere of’; PST = past; PTCP = participle; QUOT = quotative; REFL = reflexive; RES = resultative; S = sole argument of semantically monovalent verbs; SG = singular; SR = subordinator; SUBJ = subject; TOP = topic.

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<sup>24</sup> In Jóola Fóoñi, the so-called ‘actualizers’ are inflectional markers of relative verb forms characterizing the event as irrealis, realis, or anchored deictically.

<sup>25</sup> In Slavic languages, the prepositional case is a case form marking exclusively the complement of some prepositions.

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