External possession in Brazilian Portuguese
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External possession constructions, in which a DP that is a syntactic dependent of the verbal projection is semantically dependent on a nominal, are quite common cross-linguistically. They are however, subject to a great deal of variation (see Deal 2013 for an overview). This paper examines a type of external possession in Brazilian Portuguese (henceforth BP) that is typologically unusual, in which the external possessor is a core semantic argument of the verb. I argue against current raising accounts of the phenomena and propose that external possession in BP is mediated by a null, subject-oriented anaphor. The examples in (1) illustrate the pattern.

(1) A Ana molhou o irmão/ o pé
the Ana wet the brother/ the foot
‘Ana got her brother/her foot wet’

Recent accounts of external possession with multiple thematic relations (see for instance Lee-Schoenfeld 2006 for German) propose to capture it by allowing A-movement operations to target thematic positions, following Hornstein’s (1999) arguments against a strict Theta Criterion. The study of the BP external possession case is important in this sense because it provides a window into the possibility space of movement to thematic positions, given the core status of the landing site of the possessor as external argument.

Rodrigues (2010) and Floripi and Nunes (2009) in fact argue that external possession in BP lends further support to the possibility of movement to thematic positions. In their proposals, the possessor is initially merged internally to the possessive DP but because it may optionally not be able to check its Case feature in that position, it is allowed to raise to the specifier of vP, where T checks its Case, controls verbal agreement and enters into a new thematic relation. As evidence for the movement approach, Rodrigues (2010) claims that null possessors must i) have a sentential, c-commanding antecedent; ii) the antecedents must be the closests DP of the relevant type and (iii) that the dependency between possessor and relational noun cannot be established across certain island boundaries.

I show however, that once a crucial confound is eliminated, none of those predictions are satisfied. In fact, the appropriate generalization about the locality restriction on external possessor must make reference to the presence of local subjects. (2) shows that an external possessor can establish a dependency with a body part term inside a relative clause the possessive DP is itself the subject of the RC, but not if it is in object position. (2) also shows that the null possessor is subject oriented, and does not need to be bound by the most local DP here the object accident.

(2) a. A Ana<sub>1</sub> sofreu um acidente [em que [a perna <sub>t1</sub>] ficou paralisada]
the Ana suffered an accident in which the leg got paralyzed
‘Ana was in an accident in which her leg got paralyzed’ [subject]

b. A Ana<sub>1</sub> gosta do [cabeleireiro que cortou [o cabelo <sub>t1</sub>]]
the Ana likes the hairdresser that cut the hair
‘Ana likes the hairdresser that cut his/*her hair’ [object]

In addition, I show that under the right context, the null possessor is able to take non-sentential antecedents, and intra-sentential, non-commanding ones. As a whole, this paper argues that external possession in BP does not lend further support to the hypothesis of movement to thematic positions, and calls attention to the need to consider properties of anaphoric elements that tease them apart from deleted copies of movement, such as the role of subjects in defining binding domains, long-distance possibilities and orientation.