

## Chamorro Possessives at the Interface

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### A. What This Talk Is About

#### Two perspectives on the question

- What is the division of labor at the syntax-semantics-pragmatics interface?
- Is there a theory that gives a uniform account of generalizations holding at this interface?

#### Two theories that have been proposed

- Diesing's (1992) theory of Logical Form
- The Brentano-Marty-Kuroda theory judgement types (see Ladusaw 1994, Horn 2001[1989])

#### Two interface generalizations

##### (X) Milsark's Generalization (MG):

Subjects of individual-level predicates must be strong.

“Properties may only be predicated of ‘strong’ NP’s” (Milsark 1977: 16)

e.g. *All/The/Both cats are happy* is well-formed, but *\*Sm cats are happy* is not.

##### (Y) Horn's Generalization (HG):

Subjects tend to be interpreted outside the scope of sentential negation.

“...a subject potentially within the semantic scope of a sentential negation is typically interpreted as...outside its pragmatic scope...The result is that predicate denial...tends in practice to be functionally assimilated to IV (verb-phrase) negation” (Horn 2001[1989]: 514-515)

e.g. *All courses don't have prerequisites* usually means *All courses lack prerequisites*, not: *Not every course has prerequisites*.

#### The goal

Use Chamorro evidence to establish that

- MG should be explained in terms of the theory of judgement types, not the syntax of Logical Form (Ladusaw 1994, Chung 2008; see also Jäger 2001)
- HG could well be explained in terms of the theory of judgement types (Horn 2001[1989]), once an apparent complication is defused

#### Two differences between possessives in Chamorro and English

- In Chamorro possessives, D is not in complementary distribution with the possessor
- Chamorro possessives do not inherit definiteness from their possessors

#### Roadmap

- Chamorro bare possessives as a species of indefinite
- Bare possessive subjects and MG
- Bare possessive subjects and HG

### B. Setting the Stage

#### Chamorro clauses

Chamorro, an Austronesian language of the Mariana Islands, is a head-initial language with a range of null arguments. The predicate can be of any syntactic category type; there is no copula. The neutral word order of clauses with verbal predicates is VSO.

- (1)a. Ha-pätcha si nana-hu i sanhilu' i hetnu.  
agr-touch mother-agr the top.L the oven  
My mother touched the top of the incubator. (EM 91)
- b. Ha-sienti na mämpus maipi.  
agr-feel Comp too.much agr.hot  
She felt that it was too hot. (EM 91)

#### Chamorro determiners

DP's are headed by a determiner that occurs at their left edge. Three determiners of interest here: the definite article *i*, the null indefinite article, the indefinite article *un*.

- (2) palao'an / i palao'an / un palao'an  
woman the woman a woman  
a(ny) woman / the woman / a/one woman

In Chung & Ladusaw's (2004) terms, indefinites headed by the null indefinite article are composed by Restrict. Indefinites headed by *un* have a wider range of compositional options.

#### Weak vs. strong

I adopt a Milsark-style classification of determiners, according to which (i) every determiner can be classified as *weak* or *strong*; (ii) weak determiners can head the pivot of an existential sentence, but strong determiners cannot; (iii) *strong* determiners can head the subject of an individual-level predicate, but weak determiners cannot.

Assuming this, the existential sentences in (3-4) reveal that the null indefinite article and the indefinite article *un* are *weak*; the definite article *i* is *strong*.

- (3)a. Desdi esti, käda sakkan guäha nobena yan lukao.  
since this each year agr.exist novena and procession  
Since then, every year there is a novena and procession. (EM 104)

- b. Guäha un lechun gi päpa' kareta.  
agr.exist a piglet Loc under.L car  
There's a piglet under the car. (*Lechon* 2)
- (4) \*Guäha i kätini.  
agr.exist the meat  
(There's the meat.)

The sentences with individual-level predicates in (5-6) confirm that the null indefinite article is weak and the definite article *i* is strong. These examples also reveal that the indefinite article *un* can be strong.

- (5)a. \*Mu-mäguf patgun.  
agr-happy child  
(A child was happy.)
- b. \*Anakku' katta ginin i chi'lu-hu.  
agr.long letter from the sibling-agr  
(A letter from my sister was long.)
- (6)a. Mu-mäguf i pätgün.  
agr-happy the child  
The child was happy.
- b. Maolek-ña un kurasón sinku años na patgun.  
agr.good-Compar a heart.L five years L child  
A heart of a five year old child is better. (Cooreman 1983: 152)

### C. Chamorro Possessives

#### *The morphosyntax of possessive DP's*

Possessors follow the head N. N either agrees with the possessor in person and number or else is inflected with the 'linker', a bit of Austronesian morphology that also occurs in head-modifier constructions.

- (7)a. neni-ña [si Dolores]  
baby-agr Dolores  
a baby of Dolores
- b. patgon-ña [ädyu na palao'an]  
child-agr that L woman  
a child of that woman

- (8)a. neni-n [Dolores]  
baby-L Dolores  
a baby of Dolores
- b. patgun [ädyu na palao'an]  
child.L that L woman  
a child of that woman

Possessors and determiners coexist within the possessive DP and co-vary freely.

- (9)a. patgun [taotao]  
child.L person  
a child of a person
- b. pao-ña [i sädduk]  
smell-agr the river  
a(ny) odor of the river
- c. che'chu' [un kurasón]  
work.L a heart  
work of a heart (= work done for love) (heard at a meeting)
- (10)a. i familiä-nña [esti as Mrs Johnston]  
the family-agr this Obl Mrs Johnston  
the family of this Mrs Johnston (Cooreman 1982: 19-20)
- b. i gapitulu-n [patgon-ña [pro]]  
the hair-L child-agr  
the hair of a child of hers
- c. i kareta-n [i famalao'an siha]  
the car-L the women Pl  
the car of the women

#### *Bare possessives*

A possessive DP headed by the null indefinite article can have a strong possessor—one that is a pronoun, proper name, or a definite DP. I call DPs of this type *bare possessives*.

- (11)a. asagua-hu [pro]  
spouse-agr  
a spouse of mine

- b. si'se'-ña [i pätgun]  
knife-agr the child  
a knife of the child
- c. gä' [Tun Jose] ga'lagu  
animal.L Tun Jose dog  
dogs of Tun Jose

Some bare possessives are most naturally understood as unique (if singular) or maximal (if plural).

- (12)a. i bongbung [kurason-ña [pro]]  
the beat.L heart-agr  
the beat of his heart (lit. the beat of a heart of his)
- b. Hafa na mämpus amariyu [kulot-mu [pro]]?  
what? Comp too.much agr.yellow color-agr  
Why is your color so yellow? [addressed to a canary]
- c. Mañ-ísiha siha [nana-hu [pro]] yan i mankiñada-ña siha.  
agr-they.Prog Pl mother-agr and the sisters.in.law-agr Pl  
My mother (lit. a mother of mine) and her sisters-in-law were together.

*QUESTION:* Are bare possessives morphosyntactically *definite*?

Some reasons for thinking 'yes':

- prenominal possessives in English (e.g. Barker 1991; 2008)
- the Hebrew construct state (e.g. Heller 2002)
- speakers' intuitions that bare possessives merely involve omission of *i*

#### D. Bare Possessives as a Species of Indefinite

(i) *Syntactic topics (familiarity)*

Syntactic topics in Chamorro are left-adjoined to IP. They must be familiar. Possessive DP's headed by *i* satisfy this familiarity requirement, but bare possessives do not.

- (13)a. [I gä'-mu [pro]] ha-na'dañu i guälu'.  
the pet-agr agr-cause.damage the garden  
Your dog destroyed the garden.

- b. \*[Gä'-mu [pro]] ha-na'dañu i guälu'.  
pet-agr agr-cause.damage the garden  
(Your dog destroyed the garden.)
- c. \*[Tata-ña [si Miguel]] ha-hatsa ädyu na guma'.  
father-agr Miguel agr-build that L house  
(Miguel's father built that house.)

(ii) *The external argument restriction (specificity/strength)*

In Chamorro, external arguments that are realized within the clause, to the right of the predicate, must be both strong and specific (= not quantified; see Chung 1998). This restriction is satisfied by external arguments that are possessive DP's headed by *i*, but not by bare possessives.

- (14)a. Kao ha-na'lä'lu [i nana-n [ädyu na patgun]] i sapatus?  
Q agr-return the mother-L that L child the shoes  
Did that child's mother return those shoes?
- b. \*Kao ha-na'lä'lu [nana-n [ädyu na patgun]] i sapatus?  
Q agr-return mother-L that L child the shoes  
(Did that child's mother return those shoes?)

(iii) *Opaque contexts (scope)*

Possessive DP's headed by *i* are referring even in opaque contexts; bare possessives are not.

- (15)a. Malägu' si Jose mañ-odda' ni [i asagua-ña [pro]].  
agr.want Jose Infin.AP-find Obl the spouse-agr  
Jose wants to find his wife. (He already has a wife, but she's not in the vicinity.)
- b. Malägu' si Jose pära u-sodda' [si tata-ña [pro]].  
agr.want Jose Fut agr-find father-agr  
Jose would like to find his father.
- (16)a. Malägu' si Jose mañ-odda' [asagua-ña [pro]].  
agr.want Jose Infin.AP-find spouse-agr  
Jose wants to find a wife (of his). (He has no wife; he's not married yet.)
- b. Malägu' si Jose na u-fañ-odda' [tata-ña [pro]].  
agr.want Jose Comp agr-AP-find father-agr  
Jose wants to find a father. (He's looking for a foster parent; or he's illegitimate and wants to have a father.)

(iv) *Quantificational variability*

Possessive DP's headed by *i* do not participate in scope relations. Bare possessives exhibit quantificational variability; for instance, they can take narrow scope with respect to quantificational expressions like *kāda* 'each (time that)' and *sessu* 'often'.

- (17)a. *Kāda malangu* [i *patgon-ña* [*pro*]], *tristi gui'*.  
each agr.sick the child-agr agr.sad she

Every time her child gets sick, she's sad.  
(First reading: the same child gets sick on all occasions.)

- b. *Sessu malangu* [i *che'lu-nmami* [*pro*]].  
often agr.sick the sibling-agr

One of my brothers and sisters often gets sick.  
(The same sibling gets sick on multiple occasions.)

- (18)a. *Kāda malangu* [*patgon-ña* [*pro*]], *tristi gui'*.  
each agr.sick child-agr agr.sad she

Every time a child of hers gets sick, she's sad.  
(A different child gets sick on different occasions.)

- b. *Sessu malangu* [*che'lu-nmami* [*pro*]].  
often agr.sick sibling-agr

Brothers and sisters of mine often get sick.  
(A different sibling gets sick on different occasions.)

(v) *Question-answer pairs (maximality/exhaustivity)*

Questions containing possessive DP's headed by *i* elicit different answers from questions containing bare possessives. In the examples below, (b) presents the first or most natural answer volunteered to the question in (a). (Other answers are possible.)

*Scenario: A and B both know that Antonio has siblings, but only B knows that some of the siblings are smart and some are not smart. If A asks:*

- (19)a. *Kao man-malati'* [i *mañe'lu-ña* [si Antonio]]?  
Q agr-smart the siblings-agr Antonio

Are Antonio's siblings smart?

*How does B answer?*

- b. *Ti todü. / Ahi'*.  
not all no  
Not all. / No.

*If A asks:*

- (20)a. *Kao man-malati'* [*mañe'lu-ña* [si Antonio]]?  
Q agr-smart siblings-agr Antonio

Are Antonio's siblings smart?

*How does B answer?*

- b. *Guäha ha'.* / *Hunggan.*  
agr.exist Emp yes

Some are. / Yes.

(vi) *The definiteness effect in existential sentences*

Finally, possessive DP's headed by *i* cannot serve as pivots of existential sentences. But bare possessives can.

- (21) \**Taya'* [i *patgon-ña* [*pro*]].  
agr.not.exist the child-agr

(There isn't the child of hers.)

- (22)a. *Taya'* [*patgon-ña* [*pro*]].  
agr.not.exist child-agr

There isn't a child of hers / She doesn't have a child.

- b. *Guäha* [*difekto-nña* [i *adding* [i *taotao*]]].  
agr.exist defect-agr the leg.L the person

The person's leg has a defect. (EM 133)

*IN SHORT:* Bare possessives in Chamorro are always indefinite, even when their referent is presupposed to be unique. More generally, just because uniqueness *can* be encoded morphosyntactically in this language doesn't mean that it is always so encoded.

**E. Bare Possessive Subjects and MG**

*An unexpected pattern*

Recall that Chamorro has MG

- (X) Mil Sark's Generalization (MG):  
Subjects of individual-level predicates must be strong.

and that the null indefinite article is weak (see (5)). It therefore comes as a surprise that bare possessives—which have just been shown to be a species of indefinite—can serve as subjects of individual level predicates. See (12b-c) and the examples in (24).

(23) Mu-mäguf [i/un patgon-ña [si Julia]].  
agr-happy the/a child-agr Julia  
The/One child of Julia's is happy.

(24)a. Mu-mäguf [patgon-ña [si Julia]].  
agr-happy child-agr Julia  
A child of Julia's is happy.

b. Kohu [adeng-ña [si Tun Pedro]].  
agr.lame leg Tun Pedro  
Tun Pedro has a lame leg.

c. Bunitu che'chu'-ñiha [pro].  
agr.nice work-agr  
Their work was nice. (heard at a meeting)

d. Anakku' [katta-nña [i chi'lu-hu [pro]]].  
agr.long letter-agr the sibling-my  
A letter of my sister's was long.

(25)a. \*Bunitu [che'chu' [patgun]].  
agr.nice work.L child  
(Work of a child was nice.)

b. \*Anakku' [katta-n [mayót]].  
agr.long letter-L mayor  
(A letter of a mayor was long.)

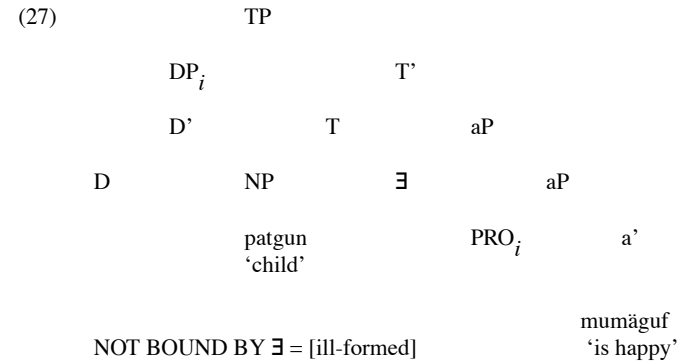
In Chung (2008), I use this pattern to argue against Diesing's (1992) syntactic account of MG and in favor of Ladusaw's (1994) semantic account.

#### *Diesing (1992) on the syntax of Logical Form*

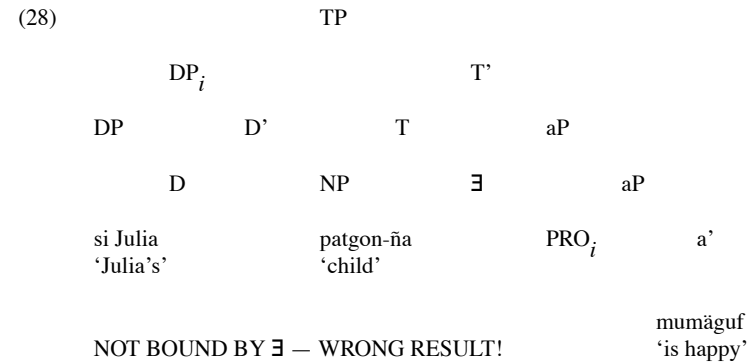
Weak DP's must be bound by the existential quantifier  $\exists$  at LF, but the subjects of individual-level predicates are merged so high that they are outside  $\exists$ 's c-command domain.

- (26) Diesing's assumptions (updated)
- Weak DP's must be bound by the existential quantifier at LF.
  - The existential quantifier is adjoined to vP.
  - Subjects of stage-level predicates originate inside vP and raise to Spec, T.
  - Subjects of individual-level predicates originate in Spec, T and control a PRO inside vP.
  - Raised subjects can reconstruct; controllers cannot reconstruct to PRO's position.

Diesing's proposal correctly predicts that examples like (5a) are ill-formed. (In the trees below), linear order is irrelevant.)



But it makes the wrong predictions when the subject of the individual-level predicate is a bare possessive.



#### *Ladusaw (1994) on the theory of judgement types*

In the Brentano-Marty-Kuroda theory of judgement types, one of the functions of the utterance of a sentence is to express a mental or cognitive act—a judgement. There are two types of judgements. *Thetic* judgements merely present a description; *categorical* judgements first present an object and then affirm or deny a property of that object. (Horn refers to the linguistic material that expresses the basis for the first part of a categorical judgement as the *psychological subject* of the judgement. Others have referred to it as the *topic*.)

- (29) Ladusaw's assumptions, part 1
- Two types of judgements: thetic (one-part) and categorical (two-part)
  - Brentano's ontology, modified: objects (individuals and events), descriptions (of objects and events), properties

Which judgement types a sentence can express follows from the interpretation of its parts. Ladusaw claims that

- (30) Ladusaw's assumptions, part 2
- Strong DP's denote objects; weak DP's denote descriptions.
  - Only an object can form the basis for the first part of a categorical judgement; a

description cannot.

- c. Individual-level predicates denote properties.
- d. A property can only form the basis for the second part of a categorical judgement; it cannot supply the basis for athetic judgement.

From this it follows that a sentence consisting of a strong DP subject and an individual-level predicate expresses a categorical judgement. But a sentence consisting of a weak DP subject and an individual-level predicate is ill-formed — semantically incoherent — because it expresses no type of judgement at all.

- (31) patgun            mumäguf  
       ‘child’            ‘is happy’

*description*    *property* = [ill-formed]

Crucially, the fit between the syntactic subject of a sentence and the ‘psychological’ subject of a categorical judgement is close but not exact. This opens the door to an account of the pattern in (24). Suppose we assume that in Chamorro, the object that forms the basis for the first part of a categorical judgement can be supplied by the syntactic subject *or its possessor*. Then sentences of the type (24) express a categorical judgement as well; see (32).

- (32) si Julia    patgon-ña    mumäguf  
       ‘Julia’s’    ‘child’        ‘is happy’

*object*            — *property* —            = categorical judgement

On the complex property formed by ‘*x*’s child is happy’, see e.g. Partee (1999); also Schafer (1995).

*A glimpse of some further questions and their answers (see Chung 2008)*

- Could the possessor in (24) be the *syntactic subject* of the clause?  
 — No. All the morphosyntactic evidence argues against this
- Could the possessor be the syntactic subject at LF?  
 — No. See the evidence from quantificational binding
- What entitles the *possessor* to be the psychological subject of the judgement?  
 — For the beginnings of an answer, see Keenan (1974) and Barker (1991)

## F. Bare Possessive Subjects and HG

Having concluded that MG should be explained in terms of the theory of judgement types, let us turn to

- (Y) Horn’s Generalization (HG):  
 Subjects tend to be interpreted outside the scope of sentential negation.

### *The profile of Chamorro negation*

Sentential negation in Chamorro is normally signaled by *ti* ‘not’, which occurs to the left of T. There are a few morphosyntactically negative verbs; e.g. *taya* ‘not exist’, *täi-* ‘not have’, *taigui* ‘not be (in a location)’.

- (33)a. Ti pära u-fan-dispensa i ma’estra nu guiya.  
       not Fut agr-AP-forgive the teacher Obl him  
           The teacher is not going to forgive him.
- b. yänggin esta taya’ [salappe’-ña [i taotao]].  
       if already agr.not.exist money-agr the person  
           if the person has no more money (EM 127)

### *HG in Chamorro*

Unsurprisingly, Chamorro observes HG. Speakers have clear intuitions that in sentences like (34), the subject must be interpreted outside the scope of negation.

- (34)a. Ti man-mattu tres na famagu’un gi giput.  
       not agr-arrive three L children Loc party  
           [There were] three children [who] didn’t come to the party.  
           (Not: \*Not (even) three children came to the party.)
- b. Ti man-ma-kastiga tres na famagu’un.  
       not agr-Pass-punish three L children  
           [There were] three children [who] weren’t punished.
- c. Ti man-lokka’ tres na famagu’un (lao man-lokka’ i tata-nñiha).  
       not agr-tall three L children but agr-tall the father-agr  
           [There were] three children [who] weren’t tall (but their fathers were tall).

The subject can be interpreted inside the scope of negation only when a wide-scope interpretation would be implausible.

- (35) Ti maloffan sinku añus na tiempu, mattu si Sandy.  
       not agr.pass.by five years L time agr.arrive Sandy  
           Not even five years had passed [when] Sandy arrived.  
           (Not: #There were five years that hadn’t passed...)

Consistent with this, the subject of a negative sentence cannot be a simple DP headed by the null indefinite article; see (36). Such indefinites are composed via Restrict and therefore take narrowest scope. But when they are subjects, HG demands that they be interpreted *outside* the scope of negation.

- (36)a. \*Ti kumahulu' dāngkulu na hāggan.  
not agr.rise.up big L turtle  
(No big turtle came up / There was a big turtle that didn't come up.)
- b. \*Ti kimasón dāngkulu na guma'.  
not agr.burn big L house  
(No large house burned / There was a large house that didn't burn.)

*Another unexpected pattern*

Horn (2001[1989], Chap. 7) accounts for HG in terms of the theory of judgement types. He proposes that the psychological subject of a categorical judgement falls outside the scope of negation (see also Ladusaw 1996). That, plus the tendency for the syntactic subject of a sentence to correspond to the psychological subject of a categorical judgement, accounts for (Y).

Horn's proposal makes clear predictions about Chamorro negative sentences in which a bare possessive is the subject of an individual-level predicate. I just argued that in sentences of this type, the psychological subject of the categorical judgement is supplied by *the possessor*. So if HG does indeed follow from the theory of judgement types, everything except the possessor should invariably be interpreted *inside* the scope of negation. In particular, the possessed NP should fall within negation's scope.

This prediction is sometimes realized.

- (37) Ti brabu [guello-nña [si Dolores]].  
not agr.healthy grandfather-agr Dolores  
Dolores has no healthy grandfather.  
— True if no grandfather of hers is healthy  
?Dolores has a grandfather who is not healthy.  
— 'Requires further explanation' if she has two grandfathers, one healthy and the other unhealthy

However, the possessed NP more commonly falls *outside* the scope of negation; see (38a) and (39a).

- (38)a. Ti metgut [adeng-nña [si Antonio]].  
not agr.strong leg-agr Antonio  
Antonio has a leg that is not strong.  
— True if he has one good leg and one bad leg
- b. Metgut [adeng-nña [si Antonio]].  
agr.strong leg-agr Antonio  
Antonio has a leg that is strong.  
— True if he has one good leg and one bad leg

- (39)a. Ti lahi [patgon-nña [si Rita]].  
not male child-agr Rita  
\*Rita has no male child.  
— Cannot be used to answer the question, 'Does Rita have a male child?' if you know that Rita is childless  
Rita's child is not male.  
— Rita has a child, but it's not a boy
- b. Tāi-patgun lahi si Rita.  
agr.not.have-child male Rita  
Rita has no male child.  
— A truthful but not maximally informative answer to the question, if you know that Rita is childless

Evidently, there is pressure for *the possessed NP* to take wide scope with respect to negation— a pattern that certainly looks like HG. But given the analysis just constructed, this cannot follow directly from the theory of judgement types, because the psychological subject of the categorical judgement in these examples is supplied not by the possessed or the entire possessive, but rather by the possessor.

*The Semantics of Possession*

There are other contexts in which the possessed NP of a bare possessive subject can unexpectedly take wide scope.

In negative sentences in which negation is introduced in a higher clause (e.g. *taya' na* 'never; lit. there is no (occasion) on which'):

- (40) Taya' ni brabu [guello-nña [si Dolores]].  
agr.not.exist Comp agr.healthy grandfather-agr Dolores  
A grandfather of Dolores is never healthy.  
— True if both grandfathers are always sick; but also  
— True if one grandfather is always sick and the other is normal

In questions:

- (41)a. Kao bunitu [lahi-nña [si Carmen]]?  
Q agr.good-looking son-agr Carmen  
Is Carmen's son good-looking?  
— Assumes that Carmen has a son; cannot be used if you don't know whether she has sons
- b. Kao gāi-lahi bunitu si Carmen?  
Q agr.have-son good-looking Carmen  
Does Carmen have a good-looking son?  
— Can be used if you don't know whether Carmen has sons

The existential commitment associated with the possessed seems to survive in the complement of an attitude verb.

- (42) Hu-diséseha mohon na u-brárabu ha' [guello-nña [si Dolores]].  
agr-hope.Prog Unreal Comp agr-healthy.Prog Emp grandfather-agr Dolores  
I hope that Dolores' grandfather is well.  
— Assumes that one of her grandfathers is still alive, just as the question  
'How's Fio?' assumes that Fio is alive.

All this brings to mind Barker's (1991: 143) observation that "the use of a possessive description commit[s] the user to the existence of both the possessor and the possessee. That is, a use of *John's dog* presupposes that John possesses a dog." What we have just seen is that Chamorro bare possessives display a similar commitment to the existence of the possessed (= to the non-emptiness of the set denoted by the possessee argument of what Barker (2008) calls the possession relation). If this presupposition is the source of the 'unexpectedly wide scope' of the possessed in (38-42), then the Chamorro facts do not stand in the way of Horn's account of HG after all. The possessor takes wide scope with respect to negation because it supplies the basis for the first part of the categorical judgement, as claimed earlier. The possessed can take wide scope because of the existential commitment associated with the possession relation in possessive DP's.

## G. Conclusion

The Chamorro evidence argues that MG should be accounted for in terms of the theory of judgement types. It is less revealing about HG. But if one accepts that the use of a possessive presupposes the existence of the possessed, an account of HG in terms of the theory of judgement types remains tenable. (A more intractable question, not addressed here, concerns the extent to which existential presuppositions are associated with subjects or topics; see Horn 2001[1989], von Stechow 2004, and many others.) In short, if there is a uniform theory of generalizations at the syntax-semantics-pragmatics interface—and there may well not be,—it seems more likely to be framed in terms of semantic-pragmatic notions than in terms of the syntax of Logical Form.

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