‘AIG’ AS A LOCATIVE AND POSSESSOR IN SCOTTISH GAELIC

By

MEGAN ELIZABETH TRAICHAL

A Thesis Submitted to The Honors College
In Partial Fulfillment of the Bachelors degree
With Honors in
Linguistics
THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
AUGUST 2013

Approved by:

[Signature]

Dr. Andrew Carnie
Department of Linguistics
The University of Arizona Electronic Theses and Dissertations Reproduction and Distribution Rights Form

The UA Campus Repository supports the dissemination and preservation of scholarship produced by University of Arizona faculty, researchers, and students. The University Library, in collaboration with the Honors College, has established a collection in the UA Campus Repository to share, archive, and preserve undergraduate Honors theses.

Theses that are submitted to the UA Campus Repository are available for public view. Submission of your thesis to the Repository provides an opportunity for you to showcase your work to graduate schools and future employers. It also allows for your work to be accessed by others in your discipline, enabling you to contribute to the knowledge base in your field. Your signature on this consent form will determine whether your thesis is included in the repository.

**Name (Last, First, Middle)**

**TRAICHAL, MEGAN, ELIZABETH**

**Degree title (eg BA, BS, BSE, BSB, BFA):**

**BA**

**Honors area (eg Molecular and Cellular Biology, English, Studio Art):**

**LINGUISTICS**

**Date thesis submitted to Honors College:**

**AUGUST 7, 2013**

**Title of Honors thesis:**

**'AIG' AS A LOCATIVE AND POSSESSOR IN SCOTTISH GAELIC**

**The University of Arizona Library Release Agreement**

I hereby grant to the University of Arizona Library the nonexclusive worldwide right to reproduce and distribute my dissertation or thesis and abstract (herein, the "licensed materials"), in whole or in part, in any and all media of distribution and in any format in existence now or developed in the future. I represent and warrant to the University of Arizona that the licensed materials are my original work, that I am the sole owner of all rights in and to the licensed materials, and that none of the licensed materials infringe or violate the rights of others. I further represent that I have obtained all necessary rights to permit the University of Arizona Library to reproduce and distribute any nonpublic third party software necessary to access, display, run or print my dissertation or thesis. I acknowledge that University of Arizona Library may elect not to distribute my dissertation or thesis in digital format if, in its reasonable judgment, it believes all such rights have not been secured.

☐ Yes, make my thesis available in the UA Campus Repository!

Student signature: [Signature]

Date: 08/07/2013

Thesis advisor signature: [Signature]

Date: 08/07/2013

☐ No, do not release my thesis to the UA Campus Repository.

Student signature: [Signature]

Date: 

Last updated: 04/01/13
ABSTRACT

In Scottish Gaelic the preposition *aig* ‘at’ is used to fulfill both locative and possessive functions, creating potentially ambiguous environments. In this paper, I examine how native Gaelic speakers navigate this preposition’s possessive and locative roles in sentences where its function is unclear, as well as the distinctions the language makes between different subtypes of possession based on Stassen’s (2009) categorization. I find that in most subtypes of possession, Scottish Gaelic creates distinct grammatical environments that do not overlap with locative environments; in the two overlapping subtypes, Scottish Gaelic speakers rely both on semantic and pragmatic information about the probability of an object’s role as well as the different underlying syntactic structures proposed by Carnie, Jung and Harley (2013) to accurately separate *aig*’s possessive and locative roles.
‘Aig’ as a locative and possessor in Scottish Gaelic

Megan Traichal
Department of Linguistics
University of Arizona

KEY

Bold word-by-word English gloss
*Italics* Scottish-Gaelic
Normal English translation
‘word’ English word
“word” sense, rendered in English
AIG POSS aig possessive
INVERTED POSS inverted possessive
POSS PRO possessive pronoun

*’Gaelic’ and ‘SG’ always refer to Scottish Gaelic

1.0 Introduction

In Scottish Gaelic, the preposition *aig* ‘at’ is used to fulfill both locative and possessive functions in the language. As such, I posit that *aig* must occur in separate grammatical environments when used as a locative as opposed to when it is used in a possessive construction in order for native speakers to accurately judge its seemingly ambiguous role. I then further analyze the possessive structure of the various subtypes of possession in Gaelic, based on Stassen’s (2009) model of possession. Based on these analyses and the work of Carnie, Jung and Harley (2013), I conclude that the locative *aig* underlyingly has a different syntactic construction than possessive *aig*, allowing speakers to accurately determine *aig*’s role in a sentence.
1.1 Description of Scottish Gaelic

Scottish Gaelic is a member of the Celtic languages spoken by approximately 59,000 speakers in the British Isles (Lewis et al. 2013). The Celtic languages are divided into two branches, Goidelic and Brythonic, with SG falling into the former branch along with Irish Gaelic and Manx (Guild 1990-91). The Celtic languages share several distinct characteristics, most notably verb-subject-object (VSO) word order, inflected pronouns and prepositions, and a complicated phonological mutation system (King 2003). Cross-linguistically, verb-initial languages are relatively rare, occurring in only 8.0% of the world’s languages (Dryer 2005). Inflected prepositions (the primary interest of this paper) are slightly less rare, but are still commonly localized in VSO languages, such as Cornish, Welsh, and the Semitic languages Arabic and Hebrew.

Although the Gaelic languages survived the rising influence of English in the British Isles, their robustness and pervasiveness is minimal today. Scottish Gaelic is still spoken and passed onto second generations primarily only in the western islands of Scotland (Lamb 2001, 9), but Lamb (2001) argues that even in rare monolingual SG households with young children, it is only a matter of time before the influence of school, media, and social pressures result in English acquisition (9-11). Despite the poor rate of monolingual or even second generation speakers, national Scottish pride has resulted in a new interest in revitalizing the heritage language and regaining use of Scottish Gaelic. A great example of this movement is the Scottish Gaelic college Sabhal Mòr Ostaig on the Isle of Skye. Founded in 1973¹, this college provides instruction, materials and a collegiate experience primarily in Scottish Gaelic. Although the college only enrolls approximately 100 full-time students², it has been pivotal in raising awareness of, interest in and respect for Scottish Gaelic, not only among Scottish people themselves, but also worldwide.

¹ http://www.smo.uhi.ac.uk/en/colaiste/index.php
² The Edinburgh Companion to the Gaelic Language, Edinburgh University Press, 2010, p45
1.2 Purpose

Although Scottish Gaelic is innumerable fascinating for a multi-faceted array of syntactic anomalies, I am particularly interested in the Scottish Gaelic use of inflected prepositions to capture several different syntactic functions. Like many languages, SG prepositions serve to indicate direction, location and a relationship between a verb or subject and an object. Consider the examples (1), (2) and (3):

(1) Direction

Tha mi a’ dol gu Tucson
be I go.PROG to Tucson

I am going to Tucson.

(2) Location

Tha a’ chaora airson a’ bhord
be the sheep on the table

The sheep is on the table.

(3) Relationship

Tha mi a’ leughadh còmhla ri Calum.
be I read.PROG along with Calum

I am reading with Calum.

These and other prepositions often convey information about space, and as an extension thereof, of time. In English, for instance, ‘around’ and ‘about’ situate an occurrence near but not necessarily on a spatial or temporal landmark (Miller 2001). Consider the following from Miller (2001, 30):

(4) Drive to the junction beyond Straiton. You’ll find the new IKEA store round there.
(5) I’ll be there about/around seven.
Regardless of the plane of the landmark (spatial or temporal), ‘about’ and ‘around’ serve the same purpose of indicating an approximate relationship between the event/object and the landmark. In a very different (but still similar) sense, Scottish Gaelic employs the locative preposition *aig* to indicate a “located” relationship both in the spatial/temporal plane and in the possession plane. An object located “at” any noun could simultaneously either be at that noun or belong to that noun, as in (6) and (7) respectively:

(6) *Tha na caoraich aig a’ chraobh.*

be the sheep.PL at the tree

The sheep are at the tree.

(7) *Tha caora agam toilichte.*

be sheep at.me happy

My sheep is happy.

It is as if *aig* forms a sense of unity between the first event/noun and the second event/noun – a sense that could account for two seemingly very different functions in English. In his introduction to the *Handbook of American Indian Languages*, Franz Boas discusses this linguistic relativity this way:

The few examples that I have given here illustrate that many of the categories which we are inclined to consider as essential may be absent in foreign languages, and that other categories may occur as substitutes. When we consider for a moment what this implies, it will be recognized that in each language only a part of the complete concept that we have in mind is expressed, and that each language has a peculiar tendency to select this or that aspect of the mental image which is conveyed by the expression of the thought (Boas [1911] 1966, 38-9).

In English, we often indicate this Gaelic sense of possession with the verb ‘to have.’ As Boas suggests, one might believe a ‘having’ verb to be essential but Scottish Gaelic does not have any equitable verb for ‘to have’; instead, it changes the way we think about prepositions and their function. Slobin (1996) says that “languages differ from one another not only in the presence or absence of a grammatical category, but also in the ways in which they allocate grammatical
resources to common semantic domains” (83). Scottish Gaelic has chosen to enlist prepositions not only in providing information about direction, placement and trajectory but also possession as well, allowing for a truly invigorating view of what it means to “be at.”

So if the SG preposition *aig* provides information about two separate grammatical relationships in Scottish Gaelic (both placement and possession; it can also be used to indicate the progressive in its *ag* form, but this use will not be addressed here), the ultimate question becomes: how do native Scottish Gaelic speakers infer the difference between these two senses of *aig*? Is there a distinct difference between “being at” and “belonging to”? Have Gaelic speakers merged the two senses? If not, what structures, forms or markers do they rely on to differentiate the two senses? I propose here that *aig* has not lost its ability to work functionally – and sensibly – as both a locator and a possessor and that native Scottish Gaelic speakers can, in fact, disambiguate these two functions. Below, I take a closer look at the potential ambiguity of Scottish Gaelic’s *aig* and the different senses native Scottish Gaelic speakers arrive at when presented with it—and how they are able to arrive at such a distinction.

1.3 *Aig* in Scottish Gaelic

Before we begin looking in-depth at a native speaker’s reactions to *aig*, let us first examine the word itself and how it generates ambiguity.

*Aig* is the locative preposition in SG. It indicates simultaneous existence in either space or time, but since SG lacks the verb ‘to have,’ *aig* can also be used as a way to create a sense of “having.” The difference between true possession and “having” with *aig* is looked at more closely in 2.0.

Like all Scottish Gaelic prepositions, *aig* can (and must) be inflected when in conjunction with a pronoun. *Aig* does not cause lenition like some other SG prepositions and accordingly its objects are unmarked.
TABLE 1 shows the inflected forms of *aig*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>agam</td>
<td>again</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>agad</td>
<td>agaibh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>Masc</td>
<td>aige</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fem</td>
<td>aice</td>
<td>aca</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These forms and *aig* + OBJECT can be used in SG to indicate both location and possession. Consider its locative use in (8):

(8) *Tha* Sam a’ leughadh aig a’ bhòrd.*

be Sam read.PROG at the table

Sam is reading at the table.

But also, we see in (9) its possessive use in conjunction with its locative use:

(9) *Tha* Sam a’ leughadh an leabhar agam aig a’ bhòrd.*

be Sam read.PROG the book at.me at the table

Sam is reading my book at the table.

The first instantiation of *aig* (*agam*) is interpreted as possessive whilst the second (*aig a’ bhòrd*) is considered locative.

Although the inflected pronouns are unambiguously possessive, one can see the potential for conflicting interpretations of *aig* + OBJECT, as we will see in examples below. How do native Scottish Gaelic speakers navigate this potential confusion? Are there definitive ways to distinguish between location and possession when using an *aig* construction in SG? Or must Scottish Gaelic speakers rely on context alone to tease apart these meanings? Before we begin, let’s examine the SG options for possession.
2.0 Possession

2.1 Possessive Forms

Scottish Gaelic employs several methods to indicate possession (HAVE, AIG POSS, INVERTED POSS, and POSS PRO), illustrated below. The possessive can also be formed in SG using the genitive case, which is essentially a more phonologically complex version of what I am calling ‘inverted possessive’ (INVERTED POSS). I have not included it in this list because it requires a more detailed analysis to explain than is necessary for this discussion and does not contribute significantly to our understanding of the aig phenomenon.

HAVE

(10) Tha na cait seo aig Mairi.
be the cats here at Mairi
Mairi has these cats.

AIG POSS

(11) Seo na cait agamsa/aig Mairi.
here the cats at.me/at Mairi
These are my/Mairi’s cats.

INVERTED POSS

(12) Seo cait Mairi.
here cats Mairi
These are Mairi’s cats.

POSS PRO

(13) Seo mo chú.
here my dog
This is my dog.
As is evidenced here, *aig* is not the only way SG can indicate possession. The genitive, **INVERTED POSS** and **POSS PRO** forms all lack *aig*. The lack of a verb ‘to have’ has allowed for a burgeoning of creative grammatical possessions, of which *aig* is only one. So then, is *aig* even prevalent enough in a possessive construction to engender confusion?

Although **POSS PRO** and **INVERTED POSS** are perfectly good options for possession, they are less preferred by native speakers. **POSS PRO** is a special possessive construction that is reserved for blood relations or parts of the body, such as ‘my mother’ or ‘my head’ (Spadaro & Graham 2001, 31); (14) would seem pragmatically odd to a native SG speaker.

(14) *Tha seo mo bhòrd.*  

be this my table  

This is my table.

According to Kockelman’s (2009) characterization of inalienable nouns, **POSS PRO** could be said to only be linguistically licensed in conjunction with an inalienable noun. Kockleman (2009) describes two criteria that underlie such nouns: “First, whatever any person may be strongly presupposed to possess (identifiability); second, whatever such personal possessions are referred to frequently (relevance)” (26). Thus such nouns as ‘mother’ or ‘head’ are considered “inalienable” and are allowed to take the so-called “inalienable” **POSS PRO**, whereas the alienable noun ‘table’ is ungrammatical in this construction (ie. **POSS PRO** necessitates +inalienable, which ‘table’ violates).

Similarly, although **INVERTED POSS** is accepted and more widely licensed than **POSS PRO** for possession, since SG is a trochaic language, **INVERTED POSS** constructions can lack the proper stress pattern required by the language’s prosodic structure which an *aig* construction often remedies. Also the genitive case is largely out of use in Scottish Gaelic (which **INVERTED POSS** is a morphologically simple version of) giving *aig* constructions a larger hold on the possessive landscape in SG. Thus, an *aig* possessive construction is often and regularly used by SG speakers, even though it is certainly not the only possessive option.
2.2 Differentiating “Having” from “Possessing”

Since *aig* is also used as a way to compensate for SG’s lack of a verb ‘to have,’ we see not only a separation between location and possession [as in (9), our original functional crossover], but also a separation between “having” and “possessing.” I define “possessing” as “belonging to” but “having” as “being in possession of at this moment.” So for instance, (10) (*HAVE*) would mean Mairi currently has these cats, but they belong to Sam, whereas (11) (*AIG POSS*) would be interpreted as even though Sam is currently house-sitting the cats and “has” them, they belong to Mairi. Refer again to (10) and (11):

(10) *Tha na cait seo aig Mairi.*  
be the cats here at Mairi  
Mairi has these cats.

(11) *Seo na cait aig Mairi.*  
here the cats at Mairi  
These are Mairi’s cats.

Stassen (2009) separates possession into degrees of ownership, distinguished by positive or negative values for two semantic features, “permanent contact” and “control,” defined by Levinson (2011) as “the possessor and the possessee are in some relatively enduring locational relation” and “the possessor exerts control over the possessee” respectively (358). These semantic features and their resulting subtypes are exemplified by the table below (17):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possessive subtype</th>
<th>Permanent contact</th>
<th>Control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alienable</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inalienable</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We’ve already seen how POSS PRO governs the second possessive subtype “Inalienable,” and Scottish Gaelic relies primarily on non-\textit{aig} prepositions to arrive at the fourth possessive subtype “Abstract.” Consider (15) and (16):

(15) \textit{Tha ceann goirt orm}\textsuperscript{3}.
\textit{be head sore on.me}
I have a headache.

(16) \textit{Tha cabhag air Calum}\textsuperscript{4}.
\textit{be hurry on Calum}
Calum is in a hurry.

For Stassen’s (2009) “Abstract” possession, SG again relies on a locative preposition (in this case \textit{air} ‘on’) to create one of the subtypes of possession. Scottish Gaelic can also use \textit{aig} to indicate some “Abstract” possessions as well, such as (17), but crucially, non-\textit{aig} locative prepositions cannot be used conversely to indicate “Alienable” possession the way that \textit{aig} can.

(17) \textit{Tha fhios agam}.
\textit{be knowledge at.me}
I know.

Stassen’s (2009) “Temporary” possession is what we would call the \textit{HAVE} possession. Levinson (2011) explains it as “a relationship between a possessor and a possessee whereby the former exerts control over the latter, but there is no entailment of an enduring locative relationship” (358). This is precisely what we see in Scottish Gaelic when we see \textit{aig} garnering a “have” reading. Based on this model by Stassen, we can see Gaelic making not only sensible but also grammatical distinctions between the first three of these possessive subtypes, dividing the language’s possessive landscape into the “Alienable” (what we’ve been calling “possession,” governed by \textit{AIG POSS} and \textit{INVERTED POSS}), “Inalienable” (governed by POSS PRO) and the

\textsuperscript{3} an inflected form of \textit{air} ‘on’
\textsuperscript{4} example adapted from \textit{Am Faclair Beag}
"Temporary" (governed by HAVE). The grammatical separation between “Inalienable”/POSS PRO and the others is fairly obvious, but what grammatical work is Scottish Gaelic doing to separate the—to native speakers—clearly perceptively separate “Alienable”/AIG POSS from “Temporary”/HAVE?

The main difference between eliciting a “have” reading [as in (10)] and a “possession” reading [as in (11)] is the presence of the true verb tha (here I use “true verb” loosely to refer to a technical copula, which in either case, functions as the verbal component of this sentence and is not classified elsewhere syntactically). Although (11) is a perfectly acceptable sentence in SG, seo acts like a “dummy construction,” roughly translating as ‘this is’ (for instance, Seo Bob ‘This is Bob’; Seo an cu agamse ‘This is my dog’). However, it lacks a true verb (seo is classified as a demonstrative). Interestingly, aig can only be interpreted as “possessing” when used in this dummy construction. Once tha is introduced, the reading is instantly converted to “having.”

While both AIG POSS and POSS PRO seem able to exist in the dummy construction, aig can only be possessive in simple sentences in the dummy construction.

Freeze (1992) discusses the “locative possession literature” and differentiates between “‘HAVE languages’ and ‘BE languages’”—that is, languages that use a verb like ‘have’ to express predicative possession, and those that lack such a verb, often expressing predicative possession with a form of the copula and a locative preposition” (355). Scottish Gaelic falls under the latter category employing BE + aig to arrive at “have”—but critically, not BE + aig to also arrive at “possession,” and thus accordingly, we see a chance for disambiguation in Scottish Gaelic between “having” and “possessing.” It seems as if Scottish Gaelic has created two separate grammatical environments, both consistent with the literature’s “BE languages.” The first environment, seen in situations with HAVE, contains both a true verb (in this case tha) + aig and elicits a “having” reading [(a)]. The second, seen in situations with AIG POSS, contains no true verb (in this case the dummy construction seo) + aig and elicits a “possessing” reading [(b)].

(a) verb + aig $\rightarrow$ “have”

(b) $\emptyset$ + aig $\rightarrow$ “possessing”

This analysis falls in line with much of the ‘have’ literature that demonstrates “that the overwhelming majority of the world’s (studied) languages express possession overtly as BE + X,
X being some functional morpheme, usually a preposition, BE a copula, with both morphemes spelling out separately in overt syntax” (Levinson 2011, 364). Gaelic clearly falls into this “overwhelming majority,” but what I find most interesting is Gaelic’s segmented grammatical environments that correspond strictly with Stassen’s (2009) four sub-categories of possession. Yes, Scottish Gaelic does not have a verb ‘to have’ and accordingly relies on the BE + X model, but BE + X is not allowed to govern all types of possession. Only Stassen’s (2009) “Temporary” (HAVE) and “Abstract” categories are governed by BE + X (albeit with distinct and separate X’s) – but “Alienable”/AIG POSS and “Inalienable”/POSS PRO are not.

In Table 3, I have added the Scottish Gaelic correlates to Stassen’s (2009) subtypes of possession [Table 2] and how Scottish Gaelic grammatically separates them:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possessive subtype</th>
<th>SG possession</th>
<th>Grammatical expression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alienable</td>
<td>AIG POSS</td>
<td>Ø + aig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inalienable</td>
<td>POSS PRO</td>
<td>the possessive pronouns, mo, do, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary</td>
<td>HAVE + aig</td>
<td>BE + X, X is defined as aig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>HAVE + air</td>
<td>BE + X, X is defined as air</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.0 Complex Constructions with Aig

We have thus far examined aig’s properties in simple sentences to tease apart where it can truly be read as “possessive” as opposed to “having.” We found that “possession” was limited primarily to the sentence using seo – but how does aig’s reading change in more complex sentences? And with the locative ability of aig once again in play, do we see more locative interpretations or possessive interpretations of aig constructions?

3.1 Locative vs. Possessive Ambiguity

The following sentences of SG generate a potential for ambiguity. We have already examined the behavior of aig in very simple sentences and arrived at the conclusion that BE + aig engenders “having” while Ø + aig indicates “possession.” But do these grammatical distinctions
hold true for more complex constructions, such as sentences where the prepositional object can be interpreted as both a plausible location (favoring the locative function) and a possessor (favoring the possessive function)? For each sentence below, I have included three readings, depending on the listener’s interpretation of aig: (A) is the locative; (B) is the possessive; and (?C) is the potential HAVE reading, assuming that BE + aig holds true. Let’s look at (18) first:

(18) Tha na cait seo aig an taigh.

be the cats here at the house
A These cats are at the house.
B These are the house’s cats.
?C The house has these cats. (HAVE reading)

In (18), only reading (A) is allowed. However, this reading could have been influenced by the fossilization of the phrase aig an taigh to mean ‘at home’. Since the meaning of this phrase is closer to an idiom than understood as a sum of its parts, it could have hindered reading (B). Let’s look at a much less static location/possessor: ‘town’.

(19) Tha na cait seo aig a’ bhaile.

be the cats here at the town
A These cats are at the town.
B These are the town’s cats.
?C The town has these cats. (HAVE reading)

Once again, only reading (A) is allowed. In order to generate reading (B), we must either use the nonlocative preposition le ‘with’ or recreate the dummy construction we saw in (11), (12) and (13) with seo:

USING LE

(20) Tha na cait seo leis a’ bhaile.

be the cats here with the town
B These are the town’s cats.
Using SEO

(21) Seo na cait aig a’ bhaile.

here the cats at the town

B These are the town’s cats.

Based on (18) and (19), it appears that possessive readings of aig can still only be achieved in the dummy construction (with seo); otherwise, it defaults to a locative reading. Based on the ‘have’ literature, (20) is still operating within a normal BE + X structure where, in this case, X has switched from aig ‘at’ to le ‘with’. But unlike Freeze (1992) posits, this new possessive reading is arising out of a nonlocative preposition (le ‘with’) rather than a locative (like aig ‘at’, which we have been looking at).

Interestingly, Levinson (2011) posits that the verb ‘have’ arises out of “nonlocative prepositions like English ‘with’ as in ‘the man with blue eyes’” when looking at the work of Kayne (1993) and Harley (2002) (355). In Scottish Gaelic however we see the sense of “having” arising out of the locative preposition aig rather than the nonlocative preposition le [recall HAVE (10)]. In fact, the nonlocative preposition le only strengthens a possessive reading, not a “having” reading, which might agree with her argument that languages which rely on nonlocative prepositions like ‘with’ to create a sense of “having” are able to develop a true ‘have’ verb, based on the underlying structural differences between the two.

Levinson (2011) discusses how nonlocative prepositions like ‘with’ are structurally different than locative prepositions, and it is this structural difference that blocks the collapse of locative prepositions (vs. a nonlocative ‘with’ preposition) into a ‘have’ verb. Levinson (2011) describes the verb ‘have’ as requiring two components: “a possessive preposition with the argument structure of Icelandic með, and incorporation of that preposition into the copula” (357). She continues:

I will argue that we find evidence in Icelandic for a little p projection within the extended PP that is parallel to little v within the vP, and that this p blocks incorporation into the copula. This p is also present with transitive locative prepositions crosslinguistically and thus more broadly blocks such incorporation (Levinson 2011, 357).
Scottish Gaelic lacks the same argument structure as the Icelandic *með* and is instead categorized as a “Location” possession, according to Heine (1997) (as opposed to “Companion”). However, if Levinson’s (2011) theory is correct, it is this “little p” projection that inhibits Scottish Gaelic *aig* from incorporating into the copula (manifested in most of these examples as *tha*) and thus prevents Scottish Gaelic from developing a ‘have’ verb.

3.2 Freeze (1992) and the Locative Paradigm

In Freeze’s (1992) analysis of locatives, he outlines three separate structure examples where all are underlingly the same and allow a locative preposition to switch from a locative phrase to a possessive phrase. He calls this the “Locative Paradigm,” illustrated below in Russian (Freeze 1992, cited in Levinson 2011):

(22) **Predicate Locative**

*Kniga* byla *na stole.*

*book.NOM was on table.LOC*

The book was on the table.

(23) **Existential**

*Na stole* byla *kniga.*

*on table.LOC was book.NOM*

There was a book on the table.

(24) **Possessive**

*U menja* byla *sestra.*

*at 1SG.GEN was sister.NOM*

I had a sister.

Let’s examine the comparable Scottish Gaelic “Locative Paradigm” using the modified examples from (19), (20) and (21) to fit Freeze’s (1992) style, but excluding the Existential category for the sake of our discussion.
In Russian, the prepositional phrases switch order in the sentence, the PP moving to the front of the sentence in (24). In Scottish Gaelic however, we see that both PP’s remain in the same location. In addition, it is unclear which form of possession Freeze (1992) is addressing in (22). Regardless of possession type, however, possession PP’s still stay at the end of the sentence in SG, allowing for the types of ambiguity we have been looking at between locative and possessive readings. It is only by moving seo into the copula position (27) or changing the preposition (28) that we can maintain “Alienable” possessive readings, the kind we are attempting to isolate (with or without the inclusion of both aig and BE + X—seemingly without).

Although we looked at underlying constructions of aig in Section 3.2 and determined that aig does in fact have two separate syntactic constructions based on its possessive vs. locative
function, and these structures help determine meaning in complex sentences involving both
types, we are still left with sentences where the possibility of either parsing of the underlying
structure are available. How do native Gaelic speakers make syntactic decisions like this?

Here, we can also clearly see that Scottish Gaelic makes a decision on the function of \textit{aig}
based upon the semantic properties of the object. Although both (25) and (26) have the same
basic structure, Scottish Gaelic makes two different functional interpretations of \textit{aig}'s role in the
sentence. In (25), \textit{aig} is read as locative; in (26) it is read as possessive. As we can see in, (27)
and (28) (and from the previous analyses of this paper), Scottish Gaelic clearly delineates other
forms of possession from any locative confusion—only “Temporary”/\textit{HAVE} possession still has
the potential to be read as locative since no grammatical distinctions exist.

I posit that in this situation (\textit{HAVE} functionality vs. locative functionality), Scottish Gaelic
begins to rely on the semantic and pragmatic entailments of the objects to determine \textit{aig}'s
functional role. In (26), the object \textit{Mairi} is animate with a likely possibility for being a possessor
and a lower likelihood for being a location, based on our pragmatic knowledge of the world. In
(25), \textit{baile} ‘town’ is inanimate with a very high probability of being a location and a lower
likelihood of being a possessor. Accordingly, \textit{aig} is deemed +possessor functionality in (26) and
+locator functionality in (25).

But as we see in (28), the object can be forced to take a possessor role with a high-probability
of location role and a low-probability of possessor role by eliminating the locative preposition
\textit{aig} and replacing it with \textit{le}. Unlike \textit{aig}, \textit{le} does not boast both possessive and locative
functionality, only a possessive function, and thus forces a possessive reading of the object (and
ultimately the sentence) when it becomes the new X preposition, even though this violates the
common pragmatic understanding. In a similar way, \textit{air} also operates on a semantic/pragmatic
probability function, adopting a locative function for high location objects (such as ‘table’) and
an “Abstract” possessive function for high possessor objects (such as ‘Calum’).

Accordingly, we can expand on \textbf{TABLE 3} by adding the new possessive construction
involving \textit{le} ‘with’:
I would like to offer a further analysis of \textit{aig}’s underlying structure as both a locative and possessor. As we saw in 3.2, the native speaker can make decisions about the nature of \textit{aig} based on pragmatic and semantic information, but what structures are native speakers choosing between? Carnie, Jung and Harley (2013) propose that \textit{aig} is not in fact one preposition, but rather a case marker and a preposition, each with its own underlying structure, even though on the surface level, \textit{aig} appears to act as a single preposition with two distinct functions. In their theory, the case marker \textit{aig} governs all of the possessive uses we have been seeing thus far while the preposition \textit{aig} governs all of the locative uses, thusly providing separate constructions for a seemingly unit \textit{aig}’s separate functions.

To begin, in Section 3.1 we arrived at a simple conclusion where \textit{aig} takes on possessive meaning only in non-\textit{be + X} environments; otherwise, it acts as ‘have’. However, this analysis is far too simplistic in the face of complex sentences like (29):

\begin{equation}
(29) \quad \text{Tha an cat } \textit{aig}_1 \ Mairi \textit{aig}_2 \ a’ \ bhòrd. \\
\quad \textit{be the cat at}_1 \ Mary \textit{at}_2 \ the \textit{table} \\
\end{equation}

Mary’s cat is at the table.

\footnote{I have chosen to categorize this second “Alienable” subtype as Gaelic’s \textit{HAVE} possession, not because it operates within the same idea of “having” that we have worked hard to separate from “possessing,” but because it follows the same grammatical structure as the other have possessions, \textit{BE + X}. “Alienable\textsubscript{2}” is still distinctly a “possessing” construct however as we have been looking at it thus far.}
In (29), both aig’s occur in the BE + X environment, yet clearly, aig₁ is taking an “Alienable” reading, not a “Temporary” reading like we might expect. And even if aig₁ is construed as having the “Temporary” meaning, we still see aig₂ taking an obviously locative meaning. What underlying structures are native Gaelic speakers choosing here in order to arrive at both possessive and locative readings in seemingly the same surface form?

Most of the ‘have’ literature suggests (30) as the underlying structure of locative prepositions when being used possessively. This is the same structure as a normal, non-possessive locative preposition:

(30)

However, Carnie, Jung and Harley (2013) argue that the underlying structure of possessive aig more closely mirrors that of non-locative preposition ‘with’ based on C-command relationships between the possessor and possessed in Gaelic. In this structure (31), the ordering of the possessed and the possessor switches:

(31)

Structure (31), however, gives us the wrong order of elements in Scottish Gaelic possession, predicting sentences such as Mairi aig cat for ‘Mairi’s cat,’ which we don’t see. Carnie, Jung,
and Harley (2013) resolve this problem by suggesting movement of the possessed and that \( aig \) exists as a case marker, not a real preposition:

\[
(32)
\]

Now, we see the correct order of elements \( cat \ aig \ Mairi \) to mean ‘Mairi’s cat’, but \( cat \) is still C-commanded by \( Mairi \), which Carnie, Jung and Harley (2013) argue is necessary for other Gaelic phenomena.

With these two structures, locative \( aig \) [with structure (30)] and possessive \( aig \) [with structure (32)] are now syntactically distinct. If we operate under the analyses of Carnie, Jung and Harley (2013), we see that \( aig \) is not in fact one preposition with two functions but two separate phenomena—a case marker and a preposition—each with its own function. The ambiguity between the two only exists on the surface level where case marker \( aig \) realizes in the same form as preposition \( aig \).

Thus native speakers can rely on syntactic clues or pragmatic clues (in the case of ambiguity) to build underlying structure in the case of \( aig \), resolving \( aig \)’s potential ambiguity problems.

5.0 Conclusion

Despite the initial appearance of potential for ambiguity between \( aig \)’s functions as both a locative preposition and part of the possessive construction, native Scottish Gaelic speakers have no difficulty in parsing out not only these two functional distinctions, but also the further semantic distinctions between Stassen’s (2009) proposed possession subtypes. Each of these subtypes is realized in a different grammatical environment, allowing Scottish Gaelic speakers to consistently infer their meaning. Although two of the subtypes (“Inalienable”)/POSS PRO and
“Alienable”/AIG POSS) do not occur a) either with aig or b) with a copula, disallowing them from ever being interpreted as locative constructions, the other two subtypes (“Temporary”/HAVE and “Abstract”/HAVE without aig) seem to rely more on semantic and pragmatic information and the innate abilities of an object to either be a possessor or a location. For instance, although the grammatical structure of Tha na cait aig a’ bhaile ‘The cats are at the town’ is nearly identical to Tha na cait aig Mairi ‘Mairi has the cats’, baile ‘town’ is semantically more strongly identified as a location than a possessor whilst Mairi is the opposite. In the case of semantically ambiguous objects, the locative reading reigns dominant with aig and the preposition is forced to switch to le (a non-locative preposition) in order to engender the possessive reading. Furthermore, Carnie, Jung and Harley (2013) have proposed a new underlying model for aig, wherein possessive aig is actually treated as a case marker whilst locative aig maintains the traditional prepositional structure. With this model, we gain a better understanding of how native Scottish Gaelic speakers create very distinct structures at the syntactic level for seemingly identical surface structures, which then create very different functional roles for aig, resulting in both possessive and locative readings in Scottish Gaelic.
References


