

Possessive *CHEZ* and *WITH*, and null *PLACE*: A study of HAVE-possessives in Arabic

To the best of our knowledge, all known Arabic dialects are BE-languages. We are not aware of the existence of a HAVE-Arabic. Also to the best of our knowledge, all Arabic dialects express HAVE-possession by combining BE with the prepositions *CHEZ* (after French *chez* ‘at x’s’) and to a lesser extent *WITH*.

We show that the version of *WITH* found in HAVE-possessives has properties that mimic those of *CHEZ*, including the meaning ‘at x’s’ and selection of a human/animate object. Drawing on relevant ideas in the literature on the structure of locatives (Kayne 2005, Longobardi 2001, Terzi 2008), we argue that *CHEZ* and *WITH* have a rich underlying structure that includes a locative preposition and a *PLACE* component. The latter can have a limited range of values in the form of null (inalienable) nouns that select a human possessor, e.g. *HOME*, *COMPANY*, *PERSON*, *POSSESSION*, *CARE*, and *CUSTODY*. In other words, we take *CHEZ* and *WITH* to be lexicalizations of English expressions such as *at x’s (home)*, *in x’s company*, *on x’s person*, *in x’s possession*, *in x’s care*, *in x’s custody*, all of which include a locative preposition and a noun that selects a human/animate possessor. The difference between *CHEZ* and *WITH* thus reduces to a difference in the range of values their *PLACE* component can take, their underlying structures and derivations being identical. We agree with Boneh and Sichel (2010) that constructions involving *TO* require a different underlying structure and derivation from possessive *CHEZ* and *WITH*.

This presentation will also address an aspect of HAVE-possessives that has arguably received less attention in the literature, namely their existential properties. Our findings confirm the view in Freeze (1992) that HAVE-possessives are essentially a species of existentials. We show that HAVE-possessives in Arabic have the same structural patterns as corresponding existentials, and therefore the same structure and derivation. We also show that the theme/possessed DP of HAVE-possessives has exactly the same properties as the theme/subject DP of existentials, which, moreover follow from the presence of an existential operator that binds it. To the extent that Freeze’s (1992) feature [loc] can be reduced to existential force, this derives the generalization that only locative relations yield possessive HAVE in Arabic.