

## Internal Versus External Possession in Lebanese Arabic

This paper is empirical in scope, aiming to document the division of labor between internal and external possession constructions (IPCs vs. EPCs) in Lebanese Arabic. Both types, illustrated in (1) and (2) respectively, involve a possessor and a possessum (in this case, ‘her’ and ‘store’), but they are different semantically, structurally, and pragmatically.

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| (1) Ziya:d      tʿaraf      maħall-a:<br>Ziad          painted store-her<br>‘Ziad painted her store.’ | (2) Ziya:d      tʿaraf- <b>la:</b> l-maħall<br>Ziad          painted- <b>her.DAT</b> the-store<br>‘Ziad painted <b>her.DAT</b> the store.’ |
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Semantically, several possession relations may be expressed via either an IPC or an EPC. These include *alienable* and *inalienable possession*, *kinship relations*, and *agent* and *theme relations*, as (3-4) illustrate.

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| (3) Agent Relation in an IPC<br>sawwarit    huzu:m-un    ʕa-l-ʕa:sʕme<br>I.recorded invasion-their on-the-capital<br>‘I recorded their invasion of the capital.’ | (4) Agent Relation in a EPC<br>sawwarit- <b>lun</b> huzu:m-un    ʕa-l-ʕa:sʕme<br>I.recorded- <b>them.DAT</b> invasion-their on-the-capital<br>‘I recorded <b>them.DAT</b> their invasion of the capital.’ |
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At the same time, IPCs may express possession relations that are not possible in EPCs. These include *identity*, *partitive*, *compositional*, *content*, *purpose*, and *measurement relations*. (5) and (6) are examples.

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| (5) Identity Relation in an IPC<br>za:ru:          madi:nit    Bayru:t<br>they.visited city-her for-Beirut<br>‘They visited the city of Beirut.’ | (6) * Identity Relation in an EPC<br>za:ru:- <b>la:</b> madi:nit-a:    la-Bayru:t<br>they.visited- <b>her.DAT</b> city-her for-Beirut |
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More importantly for our purposes, EPCs may express a range of relations that are not possible in IPCs. For example, instances of *possession minus ownership* (see Heine 2006; Aikhenvald and Dixon 2012), or what Landau (1999) and Lee-Schoenfeld (2006) refer to as transitory or temporary possessions are readily expressed in EPCs but not in IPCs. In (7), the referent of the dative has Karim’s car in her possession, but she does not own the car. The IPC counterpart of (7) would be ungrammatical.

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| (7) Ziya:d      ʕassal- <b>la:</b> l-sayya:ra      yalli    staʕarit-a:      min    Kari:m<br>Ziad          washed- <b>her.DAT</b> the-car          that    she.borrowed-it from    Karim<br>‘Ziad washed the car that she borrowed from Karim while it was in her possession.’ |
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EPCs can be different structurally as well. In addition to the well-documented fact that the possessor and possessum form a constituent in IPCs but not EPCs, only the dative in an EPC may enter a possessor-possessum relation with a non-DP argument; e.g., a CP as in (8). Also, an EPC allows for an implied/unpronounced possessum, such as <songs-his> in (9). An IPC cannot do the same.

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| (8) ħfizt- <b>illa:</b> <u>ʕu:      btitʕlub</u> lamma: btizi:                      ʕa-l-matʕam<br>I.memorized- <b>her.DAT</b> <u>what    she.orders</u> when    she.come                      to-the-restaurant<br>‘I memorized what she orders when she comes to the restaurant.’ |
| (9) btismaʕ- <b>lo:</b> <ʔaya:ni-i>      la-hayda                      l-mutʕrib ?<br>you.listen- <b>him.DAT</b> <songs-his>      for-this                      the-singer ?<br>‘Do you listen to this singer’s <songs>?’   |

Pragmatically, possessors are more salient in EPCs; they are depicted as topics, affectees, and/or objects of empathy (see O’Connor 2007; Payne and Barshi 1999). For example, the EPC in (2) is pragmatically about the possessor as a topic or affectee, whereas the IPC in (1) is strictly about the possessum. Clear tests will be used to show the difference.

Possession constructions are a cross-linguistic phenomenon that comes in two broad flavors: (i) internal possession and (ii) external possession. At first blush, the two types may look interchangeable and thus constitute a semantic, structural, and pragmatic redundancy. This paper uses evidence from Lebanese Arabic to show that this is not the case.

References:

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