Jordanian sign language: aspects of grammar from a cross-linguistic perspective
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Chapter 5: Possession

5.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the different possessive constructions found in LIU. Both attributive and predicative possessives will be discussed. Attributive possessive constructions and one of the two types of predicative possessive constructions (the ‘belong’ construction) are very similar, and are probably one and the same construction, with the possessive item (SELF) able to function both as part of a nominal phrase and a predicate. LIU also has a predicative ‘have’ construction, which is expressed by an existential when the possessum is not modified, but by juxtaposition when it is modified. This existential (EXIST) is often accompanied by a headnod. In question-answer sequences the manual part of the sign can be left out, resulting in a non-manual possessive construction.

Although a great deal of typological research has been done into possessives in spoken languages, and several universal tendencies have been described, no such work has as yet been undertaken for sign languages. Perniss and Zeshan (forthcoming a), which contains references to 26 different sign languages, is the first typological study of possessive constructions in sign languages. This means that at present only limited data is available for a cross-linguistic comparison. However, even from this limited data, it is becoming clear that some of the universals that have been proposed for possessive constructions in spoken languages also apply to many sign languages.

In this chapter, I will first briefly describe the methodology and stimuli used to elicit data on possession (Section 5.2). The possessive constructions that were elicited have been divided into two main parts: attributive possessive constructions (Section 5.3) and predicative possessive constructions (Section 5.4). The latter can be subdivided into two types: ‘belong’ constructions (Section 5.4.1) and ‘have’ constructions (Section 5.4.2). These are compared to similar constructions in other signed, and sometimes spoken, languages. The chapter ends with the conclusions and the cross-linguistic comparisons (Section 5.5).

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27 This chapter is an expanded version of Hendriks (forthcoming) “I have therefore I exist: possession in Jordanian Sign Language (LIU)”. In: Possessive and existential constructions in sign languages (Sign Language Typology Series no. 2), P. Perniss and U. Zeshan (eds.). Nijmegen: Ishara Press.
5.2 Data and Methodology

Most of the possessive constructions described in this chapter were elicited by means of different exercises that were done in pairs. These involved a picture-comparison game, a picture-matching game in which objects had to be matched to certain persons, a doctor-patient game, and an exercise in which signers had to talk about their family with the help of a family tree. Three pairs of signers were filmed doing each of the different exercises several times, using slightly different stimuli each time. Different elicitation games elicited different kinds of possessive constructions. Four of the signers were teenagers, who all had Deaf relatives. Two signers were somewhat older and did not have Deaf relatives, but did grow up at a boarding school for the Deaf.

In the picture-comparison game, two signers were each given a picture that differed in several details, as in Figure 5.1. The signers were expected to find out what the differences between their pictures were without showing each other their pictures. They then had to explain to the moderator what the differences between their pictures were. This task was intended to elicit responses such as “In my picture there is a boy” and “My boy has a basket but hers doesn’t”.

![Figure 5.1 Two pictures used in the picture-comparison game](image)

The picture-matching game consisted of 15 cards with different objects and a sheet of paper with pictures of three people of different ages, for example a boy, a woman and a grandfather. Two signers had to match the objects with the person they thought the object most appropriately belonged to, for example, a ball with the boy, a handbag with the woman and a television.

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28 The elicitation material was developed by Dr. Zeshan’s sign language typology group at the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen.
with the grandfather. This game was expected to elicit ‘belong’ constructions, such as “The ball belongs to the boy”.

In the doctor-patient game one signer (the patient) described the symptoms of an illness to the other signer (the doctor). These symptoms were written on a card in Arabic. The doctor, with the aid of a sheet of paper listing several symptoms and the illness that caused them, had to tell the patient what illness he or she had. This was intended to yield possessive constructions involving body-parts and physical states, such as “my head” or “I have a headache”. Finally, two signers had to ask each other questions about their family with the aid of a family tree diagram. This was intended to elicit possessive constructions involving kinship terms, such as “How many uncles do you have?” Overall, the material was meant to elicit possessive constructions with both ‘have’ and ‘belong’ and with both alienable and inalienable (family members, body parts) possessions. A copy of all these materials and the accompanying instructions can be found in Perniss and Zeshan (forthcoming a).

Besides the data elicited with these stimuli, I also analyzed possessive constructions in semi-spontaneous data, such as filmed narratives, conversations and teaching situations. Altogether, the data described in this chapter is based on approximately 4 hours of video-material. A questionnaire developed for typological research into possessives in sign languages aided me in the analysis presented in this chapter. This questionnaire can be found in Perniss and Zeshan (forthcoming a). The questionnaire is based on typological information about possessive constructions in spoken languages as well as information available about possessive constructions in a limited number of sign languages. The structure of this chapter is based on the questionnaire.

5.3 Attributive possessive constructions

This section will provide a description of attributive possessive constructions in LIU and a comparison of these constructions to those of other sign languages. Attributive possessive constructions are those in which the relationship between a possessor (the one who possesses something) and a possessum (that which is possessed) is expressed within a noun phrase. The resulting construction is a phrase, not a complete sentence. There are two types of attributive possessive constructions: those involving pronominal possessors (e.g. “my book”, Section 5.3.2) and those involving nominal possessors (e.g. “the book of the teacher”, Section 5.3.3). Before discussing these two types of possessive constructions, I will first present some observations about the LIU sign SELF (Section 5.3.1), which, when used in
attributive possessive constructions, can function both as a pronominal possessor and as a linking item between a nominal possessor and its possessum.

5.3.1 The emphatic/possessive pronoun SELF

The sign that I have glossed as SELF (cf. also Chapter 3.2.2) has several uses. It is often used in possessive constructions, but it can also function as a pronoun with emphatic-reflexive meaning. This pronoun, which is articulated with a \( \text{g} \)-hand, can be inflected for person, as shown in Figures 5.2 and 5.3.

![Figure 5.2: SELF₂](image)

![Figure 5.3: SELF₁](image)

Emphatic-reflexive pronouns are pronouns like “himself” in the English sentence in (5.1a). Note that the meaning of this pronoun is different from the reflexive pronoun “himself” in (5.1b).

(5.1a) John himself cut the bread. [English]
(5.1b) John cut himself.

More recently, emphatic-reflexive pronouns have also been referred to as intensifiers to distinguish them from reflexive pronouns. Intensifiers differ from reflexives mainly in that they have no argument status (cf. König and Siemund 2000). About 45% of the world’s languages have one pronoun that functions both as an intensifier and as a reflexive (Gast and Siemund 2006). Among these are, for instance, English and Arabic. A language like Dutch, however, distinguishes between the two, the form of the reflexive being
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“zichzelf” and of the intensifier “zelf”\(^{29}\). It does not appear that the sign SELF is used as a normal reflexive pronoun in LIU, but further research is needed. An example of the sign SELF used as an intensifier is given in (5.2):

\[(5.2) \text{JOSEPH RESPONSIBLE SELFright ARRANGE} \]
\[\text{“Joseph himself had been responsible for arranging it.”} \]

Apart from its use as an intensifier, the sign SELF is used mainly in attributive possessive constructions in LIU. It has various different translations and also appears to have different syntactic functions when used in possessive constructions. Apart from being used as a possessive pronoun (cf. Section 5.3.2), it can also link the possessor and the possessum in constructions with nominal possessors (cf. Section 5.3.3). In addition, it surfaces as a predicate in ‘belong’ constructions (cf. Section 5.4.1). The possessive use of SELF is often observed in emphatic contexts, and can in many cases, but not all, be translated as “my own” or “your own” depending on the spatial inflection.

From a typological point of view, it is interesting that the emphatic and possessive meanings are so closely related in LIU, particularly because a similar close relation is observed in the ‘have’ construction (Section 5.4.2). Cross-linguistically, it is uncommon that a language uses the same pronoun with both emphatic-reflexive meaning and possessive meaning. König and Siemund (2000) point out that intensifiers typically develop from expressions for body parts and typically develop into reflexive pronouns, as in (5.1b), but they do not mention the notion of possession with respect to intensifiers\(^{30}\). The fact that SELF can be emphatic even in its possessive use, as mentioned above, may provide a link between these two different meanings.

5.3.2 Attributive possessive constructions with pronominal possessors

Most attributive possessive constructions in LIU involve the use of a pronoun. In many cases a personal pronoun can be used. This is particularly true for constructions with an inalienable possessum. Crowley (1996:428)

\(^{29}\) Cf. de Clerck and van der Kooij (2005) for a comparison of the use of “zelf” in Dutch and the intensifier ZELF in NGT.

\(^{30}\) Note that in classical Greek, the pronoun ἄνθρωπος is an intensifier, but in its genitive form it can also function as a third person possessive (cf. Smyth 1956). However, the oblique cases of this pronoun also function as the personal pronoun of the third person, and it seems more likely that the possessive meaning is derived from the personal pronoun than from the intensifier.
defines inalienable as follows: “an inalienable relationship holds between two things if, under normal circumstances, the referent of the ‘possessed’ noun does not exist independently of the referent of the ‘possessor’ noun”. The category of inalienable nouns includes body parts and names. According to Lehmann (1998), such possessive constructions involving inalienable nouns, especially body parts, have a minimal use of grammatical markers cross-linguistically, because the relationship between the parts and their possessor is inherent. In line with this observation, in LIU no explicit possessive marker needs to be used in sentences like (5.3)\(^{31}\):

\begin{verbatim}
wh-question
INDEX2 NAME INDEX2 WHAT
“What’s your name?”
\end{verbatim}

In a sentence like (5.3) it would be very unusual for the pronoun SELF to occur as a pronominal possessive marker. If it were used it would add an emphatic, contrastive meaning and it could occur only in a context where, for some reason, it was unclear whose name was being asked for, as in (5.4):

\begin{verbatim}
wh-question
NAME SELF2 WHAT
“What’s your own name?”
\end{verbatim}

Interestingly, kinship terms, which are generally treated as inalienable and thus may be expected to exhibit minimal grammatical marking of possession\(^{32}\), often occur with the sign SELF in LIU, as shown in (5.5), although they can also occur with a personal pronoun as in (5.6). There is no apparent difference in meaning between the two options.

\(^{31}\) Note that pronoun doubling occurs frequently with personal pronouns in LIU (cf. Chapter 3.4.2) and does not change the meaning of the sentence.

\(^{32}\) Many Oceanic and Amerindian languages make a structural distinction between alienable and inalienable possessives. Most of these languages treat kinship terms as inalienable, but there are languages in which kinship terms are treated as alienable or contrasted with all other nouns (cf. Heine 1997:11; Seiler 1983:21). According to Heine the alienable/inalienable distinction is ultimately culture-specific.
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(5.5) FATHER+MOTHER SELF$_2$ // STAY$^3$
   “Are your parents still alive?”

(5.6) FATHER+MOTHER INDEX$_1$ TWO DEAD
   “My parents have both died.”

The sign SELF occurs particularly frequently in complex possessive constructions involving more than one kinship term, as in (5.7):

(5.7) MOTHER SELF$_2$ SIBLING WHAT
   “What about your mother’s siblings?”

The emphatic/possessive pronoun SELF is also used with alienable possessions, as in (5.9). Sentences with a personal pronoun and alienable possessions do occur, but these are often ambiguous in structure, as indicated in the translation of (5.8).

(5.8) SHOES INDEX$_1$ RED INDEX$_3$ GREEN
   “My shoes are red and hers are green.” OR
   “I have red shoes, she has green ones.”

(5.9) PHARAOH RING SELF$_{left}$ TAKE-OFF
   “Pharaoh took off his own ring.”

A sentence like (5.8) could be parallel to (5.3), where the personal pronouns have possessive meaning, or it could be a predicative ‘have’ construction (Section 5.4.2.2). If the pronouns in both (5.8) and (5.9) are interpreted as attributive, the difference between them would appear to be one of emphasis. In (5.9) SELF is best translated as “his own”, and the construction can be more or less emphatic depending on the facial expression of the signer. Thus, when used with alienable possessions, the pronoun SELF appears to be both possessive and emphatic. This emphatic meaning is not present when SELF is used with kinship terms.

It would seem, then, that kinship terms function as a separate class in LIU attributive possessive constructions, in that they behave differently from both alienable possessions and inalienable possessions like body-parts.

The yes/no question marker (consisting of raised eye-brows and a head-tilt forward) occurs only on the final sign, possibly because the first part of the sentence is topicalized (as indicated also by a slight pause between the signs SELF$_2$ and STAY). The scope of this marker is the whole sentence. A similar example is found in (5.11d).
and signs like NAME (as in (5.3) and (5.4)). SELF occurs more frequently with kinship terms than with any other type of possessive noun, and, in contrast to other uses with alienable and inalienable possession, its does not appear to add emphatic meaning when used with kinship terms.

When SELF is used in attributive position, it occurs most frequently after the noun it modifies, as in (5.7) and (5.9). In an elicitation exercise involving a family tree, the sign SELF occurred as a possessive pronoun 72 times. In 67 out of these 72 occurrences (93%) it followed the possessum.34

When a personal pronoun is used with possessive meaning the word order appears to be more flexible than with the emphatic/possessive pronoun SELF. A personal pronoun functioning as possessor can precede or follow the possessum and it can also be doubled, appearing both before and after the possessum. However, since some of these constructions are ambiguous between an attributive construction and a predicative ‘have’ construction, it is problematic to compare the distribution of the personal pronoun in these constructions with that of SELF.

Both SELF and personal pronouns can also be articulated simultaneously with the possessum on the dominant or non-dominant hand (cf. Chapter 6.6.1). Often, however, the simultaneous construction involves perseveration of either the pronoun or the possessum (cf. (6.19)), which means that the relative word order of the pronoun and the possessum can still be determined.

Cross-linguistically, sign languages differ in the number of pronouns that can be used in attributive possessive constructions. Some sign languages, like CSL (Perniss and Zeshan, forthcoming a), Kata Kolok (a Balinese village sign language, Perniss and Zeshan, forthcoming b) and Adamorobe Sign Language (AdaSL, Nyst, forthcoming) only have personal - deictic - pronouns, which are also used in possessive constructions. Likewise, NS has two types of personal pronouns (neutral and polite) which can also be used in possessive constructions (Morgan, forthcoming). It is interesting to note that of the 26 languages in the Perniss and Zeshan corpus those that lack specifically possessive pronouns are either from South-East Asia or village sign languages.

Most sign languages, however, do have separate possessive pronouns, and in some cases even different types of possessive pronouns. Both Ugandan Sign Language (USL) and LSC, for instance, have two sets of possessive pronouns, one of which is emphatic and implies a permanent relationship. Moreover, these two sign languages can also use personal

34 In the other five occurrences there were two cases in which it preceded the noun, two cases in which it was repeated and both preceded and followed the noun, and one case in which the noun itself was repeated and the pronoun occurred in between the two occurrences.
pronouns in possessive constructions (Lutalo, forthcoming; Quer and GRIN, forthcoming). Russian Sign Language even distinguishes three types of possessive pronouns: a possessive pronoun, a possessive/existential pronoun, and an emphatic impersonal possessive (Perniss and Zeshan, forthcoming a). IPSL is like LIU in that it can use personal pronouns for possession but also has a more emphatic possessive pronoun (Perniss and Zeshan, forthcoming a). Likewise, Flemish Sign Language (Vlaamse Gebarentaal, VGT) uses personal pronouns in attributive possessive constructions, but also has a separate set of possessive pronouns (Vermeerbergen and DeWeerdt, forthcoming). The possessive pronouns in VGT, however, do not appear to be emphatic, as they are, at least when used with alienable possessums, in LIU.

Most sign languages, then, seem to be able to use personal pronouns in possessive constructions, although Schalber and Hunger (forthcoming) mention this is exceptional in ÖGS. In addition, however, some sign languages have one or more sets of specifically possessive pronouns. There are some differences as to the kind of relationships that can be expressed by a possessive or a personal pronoun. Thus, in IPSL the emphatic possessive pronoun is not used with kinship terms, whereas it is commonly used with kinship terms in languages like ASL and ÖGS (Chen Pichler et al. 2008), BSL (Fenlon and Cormier 2008) and LIU. In general it seems that an inalienable, inseparable possessum such as a body-part or name is more likely to be modified by a personal pronoun than by a possessive pronoun (cf. Quer and GRIN (forthcoming) for LSC). However, based on the available data on possessive constructions in sign languages, there is little evidence of the systematic use of different constructions for alienable and inalienable possession (Perniss and Zeshan, forthcoming a).

A special type of possessive marking that occurs only in certain sign languages is spatial inflection of the possessum. This spatial inflection is only possible on certain signs, namely signs that are not body-anchored. LSC, for instance, can use spatial marking instead of personal or possessive pronouns. In the example below spatial inflection on the possessum BOOK, that is, articulation in the direction of the respective possessor, is the exclusive marker of the possessive relationship (Quer and GRIN, forthcoming).

(5.10) BOOK$_2$ EASY // BOOK$_1$ DIFFICULT [LSC]

“Your book is easy, my book is difficult.”

However, in the corpus of Perniss and Zeshan (forthcoming a) such constructions do not appear to be very productive. The extent of their productivity across sign languages has not yet been investigated.
As far as word order within the noun phrase is concerned, the cross-linguistic data show that in several sign languages there is no strict word order between a pronoun and its possessum. Thus, in ASL and VGT the order can be pronoun-possessum, possessum-pronoun, or pronoun-possessum-pronoun. In ASL all these orders are possible with possessive pronouns, despite the fact that there is a preference for personal pronouns used in possessive constructions to precede the possessum. Similarly, in Kata Kolok the pronoun in possessive constructions may precede or follow the possessum. When a sign language does have a strict word order, this may be due to influence from the spoken language. Thus, in ÖGS, as in German, the pronoun always precedes the possessum, although in ÖGS it may be repeated after the possessum. Likewise, the order possessum-pronoun in LIU may be influenced by Arabic, in which possessive pronouns are expressed as suffixes on the possessum.

5.3.3 Attributive possessive constructions with nominal possessors

Besides constructions involving a pronoun and a noun, an attributive possessive relationship can also be expressed by two nouns: one functioning as possessor and one as possessum. An example from English would be “John's book”. In an attributive possessive relationship in LIU, the nouns denoting possessor and possessum can be simply juxtaposed, as shown in examples (5.11a) to (5.11e):

(5.11a) LANGUAGE DEAF
       “the language of the Deaf”

(5.11b) BOTHright SERVANT PHARAOH INDEXright
       “Both of them were servants of Pharaoh.”

(5.11c) MOHAMMED PROBLEM NOT-MY-BUSINESS
       “Mohammed’s problem is none of my business.”

(5.11d) SAMIRA FATHER SIBLING // EXIST
       “Does Samira’s father have siblings?”

(5.11e) BLOOD SLAUGHTER SHEEP
       “the blood of a slaughtered sheep”

In an attributive possessive relationship in LIU, the possessum can be a concrete noun as in (5.11e), or an abstract noun as in (5.11a) and (5.11c). Also, the possessum can have an animate referent, as in (5.11b) and (5.11d),
or an inanimate referent, as in (5.11a), (5.11c) and (5.11e). In (5.11a) to (5.11d) the possessors are human, but the possessor can also be non-human as in (5.11e). The order of possessor and possessum appears to be somewhat flexible, although there seems to be a preference for the possessum to come first as in (5.11a), (5.11b) and (5.11e). In both examples in which the possessor precedes the possessum, (5.11c) and (5.11d), the possessor is human and referred to by name. Thus, the relative order of the possessor and the possessum in these examples may reflect differences in the topicality of the possessor. However, the data does not include sufficient examples of juxtaposition with different types of possessors to test this hypothesis.

The juxtaposition of two nouns to express a possessive relationship resembles the ‘construct state’ construction in Arabic (both spoken Jordanian Arabic and MSA). Thus, (5.12) shows an Arabic translation of (5.11a).

(5.12) lughat al-ṣum
language DEF.ARTICLE-deaf
“the language of the Deaf”

Unlike LIU, however, the construct state in Arabic has a strict word order in which the possessum always precedes the possessor.

In LIU, it is also possible to explicitly mark the possessive relationship between two nouns with the pronoun SELF. Again, this strategy is found with both an abstract possessum, as in (5.13a) and a concrete possessum, as in (5.13b). Likewise, SELF can occur with an animate possessum, as in (5.13d) and an inanimate possessum, as in (5.13a), (5.13b) and (5.13c). Even inanimate possessors can occur with SELF, as in (5.13c).

(5.13a) SIGNING LANGUAGE SELFneutral DEAF
“Sign language is the language of the Deaf.”

(5.13b) JOSEPH ONCE VISIT ROOM SELFleft POTIPHAR INDEXleft
“Joseph once visited Potiphar’s room.”

(5.13c) FLAG SELFneutral JORDAN BEAUTIFUL
“The flag of Jordan is beautiful.”

(5.13d) WIFE FATHER SELFforward-right HOUSE ALL LOCK-UP
“The wife’s father locked up the whole house.”

When the pronoun SELF occurs in an attributive construction with two nouns it normally follows the possessum. The most common order is possessum-SELF-possessor, as in (5.13a-c). SELF also follows the possessum in (5.13d) although the word order in that example is different, namely possessor-
possessum-SELF. This is in line with the fact that SELF usually follows the possessum when it functions as a possessor pronoun.

The construction with SELF does not appear to be possible when a possessive relationship involves body-parts or concrete part-whole relationships. It seems that the possessor and the possessum in a possessive construction need to be separable in order to use this construction. If one is attached to the other, signers will either use juxtaposition or spatial means to express the relationship. The example in (5.14) would appear to be an exception since it includes a part-whole relationship involving SELF. This is, however, not a possessive construction meaning “the grapes of the tree” but rather a specification of the type of tree (“a tree specifically for grapes”).

(5.14) TREE GRAPES SELFneutral
“a grape-tree”

In Section 5.4.1 I will show that these attributive constructions in LIU have a predicative equivalent, which will be called the ‘belong’ construction. The two constructions are very similar in both form and meaning.

Cross-linguistically, there does not appear to be a great deal of variation between different sign languages when it comes to possessive structures involving two nouns. Most sign languages simply juxtapose the possessor and possessum. This has been reported for sign languages of very diverse origins, such as VGT, ASL, Kata Kolok and AdaSL (Perniss and Zeshan, forthcoming a). Juxtaposition is particularly common when part-whole relationships or body-parts are involved. This may have to do with the fact that these relationships are not canonically possessive, that is, I don’t ‘own’ my leg, and a tree does not ‘own’ its leaves or a printer its paper. To use an explicitly possessive construction in such cases appears to be impossible in many sign languages such as ASL or ÖGS.

Besides juxtaposition, some sign languages can mark a possessive relationship between two nouns more explicitly. In ÖGS, for instance, just as in LIU, juxtaposition is very common, but the possessive pronoun can be inserted between a possessor noun and a possessum noun (Schalber and Hunger, forthcoming). Likewise, VGT can use the possessive pronoun in attributive possessive constructions like (5.15a). Note that the order in this example (possessor-pronoun-possessum) is the opposite of the order found in LIU. VGT has yet another option, however, whereby the sign OF (VAN) is inserted, as in (5.15b). In this case the order of possessor and possessum is reversed (Vermeerbergen and DeWeerdt, forthcoming). The sign OF is phonologically identical to the possessive pronoun, except for the mouthing van. Interestingly, it can also be used with the meaning “typical of” or “specific for”, like the sign SELF in LIU.
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(5.15a) FATHER POSS₃rd person LADDER [VGT]
“father’s ladder”

(5.15b) MOTHER OF SOETKIN
“Soetkin’s mother”

Similarly, LSC has a linker item DE (“of”) which may intervene between the possessor and possessum to overtly mark the possessive relationship. This linker may also occur with pronominal forms. However, LSC also allows juxtaposition as well as the use of the possessive pronoun in these constructions. In addition, LSC has a special linker for kinship relationships, or, more generally, relationships between people (Quer and GRIN, forthcoming). The kinship linker in LSC is an interesting phenomenon that has not been found in other sign languages. More research needs to be done to explore the existence of similar linkers in other sign languages.

Some signers of ASL make a possessive relationship between two nouns explicit by signing a fingerspelled -S after the possessor noun. This is obviously a construction that has been borrowed from English, through Signed English, but it appears to be acceptable in ASL (Chen Pichler and Hochgesang, forthcoming), especially in complex noun phrases, such as (5.16).

(5.16) POSS₁ FATHER -S BROTHER -S WIFE [ASL]
“my father’s brother’s wife”

In general, it is interesting that there is so little cross-linguistic variation in nominal attributive possessive constructions. It appears that those languages that can mark the possessive relationship overtly, generally use the possessive pronoun to do so, except when a construction is borrowed from the surrounding spoken language, as in ASL. It may be that word order in these overtly marked possessive constructions is influenced by the surrounding spoken language, although ÖGS does not fall into this pattern. The influence of the spoken language is most clearly seen in the case of ASL, which uses a construction borrowed from English and also uses the corresponding English word order. It is also true for VGT, which has two different constructions, both of which also occur in Dutch with the same word order. Similarly, the LIU word order corresponds to the word order of Arabic construct states.
5.4 Predicative possessive constructions

In predicative possessive constructions the notion of possession is expressed by a complete sentence, the predicate of which contains the possessive element. Two different types of predicative possessive constructions can be distinguished: ‘have’ constructions (Section 5.4.2) and ‘belong’ constructions (Section 5.4.1). According to Heine (1997), all known languages have a conventionalized means for expressing a distinction between ‘have’ and ‘belong’ constructions. Sometimes this distinction is indicated only by a difference in word order, or by reversing case functions, but it is also possible that ‘have’ and ‘belong’ constructions are entirely different constructions, using different verbs, as in the English examples in (5.17)

(5.17a) I have a car.  [English]
(5.17b) The car belongs to me.

The semantic and syntactic differences between these constructions have been described in various ways. Watkins (1967) argues that in ‘have’ constructions the possessor receives emphasis whereas in ‘belong’ constructions the possessum receives emphasis. Structurally, in ‘have’ constructions the possessor tends to be the subject or topic of the clause whereas in ‘belong’ constructions the possessum is often the subject or topic, as is true for the examples in (5.17). Related to this is the fact that in ‘have’ constructions the possessum is usually indefinite, whereas in ‘belong’ constructions the possessum is typically definite. A difference in meaning between ‘have’ constructions and ‘belong’ constructions is that the former frequently have a wider range of meaning than the latter. In particular, ‘belong’ constructions usually express permanent ownership only.

5.4.1 ‘Belong’ constructions

LIU has a ‘belong’ construction, which appears to be derived from attributive constructions and uses SELF as part of the predicate, as in (5.18). The sign SELF may be directed towards the location of the possessor, or, if the possessor has not been localized explicitly, it may be directed to a point in neutral space ahead of the signer.

(5.18a) SCISSORS SELF neutral OLD-PERSON

“The scissors belong to the old lady.”
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(5.18b) PURSE GIRL SELF_{neutral}  
“The purse belongs to the girl.”

The examples in (5.18) were produced as complete utterances in the matching game, described in Section 5.2. In these utterances SELF functions as a predicative element, rather than a pronoun or linking item within a noun phrase. LIU is not unique in employing a very similar construction for attributive and predicative possession. In Dutch, for instance, the preposition van (“from/of”) can be used with possessive meaning in both attributive (5.19a) and ‘belong’ constructions (5.19b).

(5.19a) Dat is het boek van Jan. [Dutch]  
that is the book of John  
“That is John’s book.”

(5.19b) Dat boek is van Jan.  
that book is of John  
“That book belongs to John / That book is John’s.”

Using a pronoun in a predicative function in a possessive construction is also observed in English (“It is mine.”). Ultan (1978:27) refers to constructions like “it is mine” or “the book is John’s” as possessive substantives. Although little cross-linguistic data on ‘belong’ constructions in sign languages exists, it appears that possessive substantives occur in a number of sign languages (Perniss and Zeshan, forthcoming a).

The examples in (5.18) show that SELF can come both before and after the possessor. The possessum in these constructions normally precedes the possessor, in line with cross-linguistic expectations for ‘belong’ constructions. In Section 5.3 it was shown that the same word orders occur in attributive constructions in LIU. Although the sign SELF in (5.18a,b) has been translated as “belong”, it can also mean “for” in the sense of “specifically for” or “just right for someone”. Thus, depending on the context, sentence (5.18b) could also mean “the purse is just right for the girl”. This is very similar to the meaning of the pronoun SELF in the attributive construction in (5.14).

When SELF is inflected for person, it is not always clear whether it functions as a predicate or as part of a noun phrase, since it usually follows

35 The pronoun SELF can even be used with adjectival meaning in a sentence like INDEX1 EXIST PROBLEM SELF, which means “I have a problem of my own/ a personal problem”.

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the possessum in both constructions. Thus, a sentence like (5.20) is ambiguous between an attributive and a predicative meaning.\footnote{Prosodic markers, such as a slight pause between either the index and CAR or between CAR and SELF, and non-manuals might disambiguate between the two readings. More research into such prosodic markers is needed, however.}

\begin{equation}
\text{(5.20) INDEX CAR SELF}_1 \quad \text{“That is my car.” OR “That car is mine”}
\end{equation}

It is possible that the ‘belong’ construction has been derived from the attributive construction through a process of re-analysis. In that case the pronoun in attributive position, the first reading of (5.20), would be re-analyzed as a possessive substantive, as in the second reading of (5.20), and could subsequently also be used in constructions like (5.18), in which it does not really function as a pronoun anymore, but rather as a predicative/verbal element. Since LIU does not have a copula, the difference between the first and second reading of (5.20) cannot be derived from the location of the copula, as in English. The re-analysis may also be related to the emphatic nature of SELF. Heine (1997) mentions that possession is presupposed in attributive constructions but is asserted, and thus more emphatic, in predicative constructions.

The ‘belong’ construction in LIU is normally used for permanent ownership and is less likely to be used for temporary possession. Thus, a sentence like (5.20) conveys the meaning that the signer owns the car. It would not normally be used to indicate, for example, that the signer has rented or borrowed a car for a short period of time. This is one of the ways in which the ‘belong’ construction differs from the ‘have’ construction. This point will be further discussed in 5.4.2.1.

As in attributive constructions, the sign SELF is not normally used in predicative constructions with body-parts or part-whole relationships. The semantic reasons for this constraint are quite obvious. Generally, it is redundant, if not odd, to express ownership of something that is an inherent part of a person or object unless it is for emphatic or contrastive purposes. Hence, SELF can only be used in a non-contrastive sense when the possessum and possessor are separable. It could be used, for instance, to indicate that a set of false teeth in a cup on the sink belongs to a certain person. If it were used in reference to teeth that are in a person’s mouth, it could only have emphatic/contrastive meaning, namely to assert that those teeth really are someone’s own teeth rather than false teeth.

In summary, it would seem that SELF functions in the same way in attributive constructions and predicative constructions on several counts. Structurally, the word order in both constructions is the same. As far as
distribution is concerned, SELF in both constructions occurs with alienable and kinship relationships, but not with inalienable part-whole relationships. Also, from a semantic point of view, SELF can mean both “belong” as well as “for” in attributive and predicative constructions. In the attributive constructions in (5.13) SELF could also be translated as “belonging to”. Thus, rather than treating the ‘belong’ construction as separate from attributive constructions with SELF, it could be claimed there is one construction with SELF and the interpretation of this element as either a possessive pronoun or a possessive substantive depends on the context.

Cross-linguistically, there is not much data on ‘belong’ constructions in sign languages and much of the available data is ambiguous. It appears that, where sign languages have a ‘belong’ construction, it functions like the construction in LIU, with a possessive pronoun in the predicative slot. This is true, for instance, in VGT, which is also similar to LIU with respect to the related attributive possessive constructions (Vermeerbergen and DeWeerdt, forthcoming). Similarly, in TID, the same possessive pronoun can be used in attributive and in predicative constructions, as in (5.21) (Perniss and Zeshan, forthcoming a). In contrast to LIU, however, the two constructions can be distinguished in TID by a word order difference, the pronoun occurring before the possessum in the attributive possessive construction (5.21a) and after the possessum in the predicative construction (5.21b).

(5.21a) POSS1 CAR GOOD [TID]
“My car is good.”

(5.21b) CAR POSS1
“The car is mine.”

Likewise, in CSL, the personal pronoun, which is also used as a possessive pronoun, can be used predicatively in ‘belong’ constructions, but in this case its movement is repeated (Perniss and Zeshan, forthcoming a). A similar form of reduplication of the pronoun has also been described for ASL (Chen Pichler and Hochgesang, forthcoming). LSC uses a sign in ‘belong’ constructions that appears to be a reduplicated form of the linker DE (“of”), which is also commonly used in attributive possessive constructions (Quer and GRIN, forthcoming).

Pronouns that are used in predicate position can usually be inflected in the same way as attributive possessive pronouns. As in attributive possessive constructions, spatial inflection may not only occur on the pronoun, but also on the possessum in some sign languages. As was stated in Section 5.3.2, this spatial inflection is not productive in that it can only occur on a limited number of signs, namely those that are not body-anchored. Apparently, in ASL, when the possessum is spatially inflected, the
possessive element is optional, as illustrated in (5.22) (Chen Pichler and Hochgesang, forthcoming). When it is present, both the possessums and the possessive pronouns are directed in space towards the possessors. (The ‘++’ in this example represent reduplication.)

(5.22) GREEN$_2$ (POSS$_2$++) , BLUE$_1$ (POSS$_1$++) [ASL]

“The green one is yours, the blue one is mine.”

From the limited available data, it would seem that sign languages are very similar in the type of ‘belong’ constructions that occur. Basically, almost all sign languages for which a ‘belong’ construction has been established thus far use the possessive pronoun, or the personal pronoun when they do not have a separate possessive pronoun, in predicate position. There are slight differences between sign languages as to whether the form of this pronoun differs depending on whether it occurs in attributive or predicative position. In some sign languages, for example, differences in word order occur, as in (5.21), or one of the forms is reduplicated, as in (5.22). In general, however, there seems to be a close relationship between attributive possessive constructions and ‘belong’ constructions in sign languages. Although these two constructions are also related in certain spoken languages, as shown by the Dutch examples in (5.19), it is striking that this relationship is attested in all sign languages for which data on both constructions is available.

5.4.2 ‘Have’ constructions

In ‘have’ constructions the main emphasis is on the possessor. In these constructions, the possessor is the subject or topic of the sentence and the possessum is typically indefinite. According to Heine (1997:45)

“possession is a relatively abstract domain of human conceptualization, and expressions for it are derived from more concrete domains. These domains have to do with basic experiences relating to what one does (Action), where one is (Location), who one is accompanied by (Accompaniment) or what exists (Existence).”

Possessive ‘have’ constructions are generally derived from one of these domains by means of grammaticalization. Although Arabic does not

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37 Morgan (forthcoming) mentions that the sign EXIST-unmarked in NS may occur with and without spatial inflection. He hypothesizes that the inflected EXIST form may have the meaning ‘belong’. However, the data he supplies does not show that there is a semantic difference between the two forms, and the hypothesis seems to be based merely on the phonological difference.
construe possessives in terms of existence, LIU has borrowed an existential from Arabic and uses it as a possessive with unmodified nouns.

This section will distinguish between two types of ‘have’ constructions in LIU: those with unmodified nouns (Section 5.4.2.1), and those with modified nouns (Section 5.4.2.2).

5.4.2.1 ‘Have’ constructions with unmodified nouns

LIU uses the existential EXIST in ‘have’ constructions (Figure 5.4). This sign is usually made with the mouthing “fi” and may be accompanied by a headnod. In addition, the negative existential NEG-EXIST (Figure 4.5, repeated here as Figure 5.5), which was introduced in Chapter 4.3.1 as a clause negator, can also be used with negative possessive meaning.

In spoken Jordanian Arabic, the word fi (في) can either be a preposition meaning “in”, or an existential that could be translated as “there is/are”. When fi occurs as a preposition, it is usually followed by a definite noun, whereas it is followed by an indefinite noun when it is used as an existential. According to Freeze (1992), who claims that locatives, existentials and possessives have a basic underlying structure, the existential use of fi is derived from a locative consisting of the preposition “in” and the third person singular object pronoun. A sentence from spoken Jordanian Arabic containing both uses of fi is presented in (5.23).

(5.23) fi ḥisān fi al-maghāra [Jordanian Arabic]

there-is horse in DEF.ARTICLE-cave

“There is a horse in the cave.”
Neither MSA nor spoken Jordanian Arabic uses the existential *fi* in possessive constructions, as LIU does. In Nubi, an Arabic-derived creole from Kenya, however, this word is used both as an existential and in possessive constructions (Heine 1997:137). The following two examples show the use of *exist* in LIU with existential and possessive meaning. In (5.24) *exist* has an existential function, which parallels that of *fi* in Arabic. In (5.25) it is used possessively with the meaning “have”.

\[(5.24) \text{conditional} \quad \text{IF PERSON STEAL EXIST // KILL}^{38} \]
\[\text{“If there is a person who has stolen, kill him.”}\]

\[(5.25) \text{yes/no question} \quad \text{INDEX}_2 \text{SIBLING EXIST INDEX}_2 \]
\[\text{“Do you have siblings?”}\]

When *exist* is used in existential or possessive constructions it typically occurs with nouns, as in the two examples above. In LIU, however, *exist* can also occur with verbs as a marker of emphasis or assertion. Thus, the LIU ‘have’ possessive is not only closely related to existential constructions but also to assertive/emphatic constructions. There is an interesting parallel here to the use of *self*, which can also have both possessive and emphatic meaning (Sections 5.3 and 5.4). An example of *exist* with emphatic/assertive meaning is presented in (5.26). Like the possessive meaning, the emphatic/assertive meaning does not exist for Arabic *fi*.

\[(5.26) \text{headnod} \quad \text{EXIST STEAL JOSEPH SAY STEAL EXIST} \]
\[\text{“You have stolen, Joseph says, you have stolen.”}\]

Some signers appear to inflect the sign *exist* in possessive constructions by changing its position in space. Thus, the sign can be articulated close to the signer to mean “I have” and close to the addressee to mean “you have”. This inflection for subject-agreement does not occur in existential constructions, because the subject of an existential construction is not usually present in the vicinity of the signer. Inflection is not observed in emphatic constructions either, because in these constructions *exist* does not modify a noun but a verb. The subject agreement in possessive constructions appears to be optional and occurs most frequently when *exist* is followed by a personal

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38 In fact, this example is ambiguous between an existential and an assertive reading (cf. 5.26). It could also be interpreted as: “If someone really has stolen, kill him.”
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pronoun. Thus, it may be a kind of regressive assimilation to the location of the pronoun, as illustrated by (5.27).

(5.27)  yes/no question

STOMACH PAIN EXIST$_3$ INDEX$_2$

“Do you have a stomach ache?”

The sign EXIST can be made once with a single downward movement of the index finger, or with a smaller, repeated movement. In the latter case, the accompanying headnod is also repeated and more restrained and the accompanying mouth pattern is reduced to “ffff”. The repeated form of EXIST is not used in questions and is less emphatic than the form with a single downward movement. The phonological form of the sign is interesting because it looks like a locational, thus providing support for Freeze’s (1992) claim that locatives, existentials and possessives are related. Indeed, it is probable that the phonological form of the LIU sign is derived from the locative sign HERE, which is very similar in form but is not accompanied by the mouthing.

In informal signing, the manual part of the sign EXIST can be dropped. This is particularly common in question-answer sequences, but does not occur frequently in narratives. In (5.28) the headnod$^{39}$ at the end of the construction indicates that the construction is possessive:

(5.28)  yes/no question

WOMAN INDEX$_2$ picture APRON

“Does the woman in the picture have an apron?”

The negative form of the sign EXIST is the suppletive form NEG-EXIST (Figure 5.5 above). This sign is normally accompanied by the mouthing “ma-fi” consisting of the existential fi and the negative particle ma borrowed from spoken Jordanian Arabic. Like its positive counterpart, ma fi can only be used in existential constructions in spoken Jordanian Arabic. In LIU, the sign NEG-EXIST can be used as both a negative existential and a negative possessive with nouns. Moreover, as has already been discussed in Chapter 4.3.1, it can also function as a more general clause negator. Because NEG-EXIST is produced at the mouth, that is, body-anchored, it cannot undergo any spatial inflection in possessive constructions. In (5.29) NEG-EXIST is used as a negative existential, corresponding to its use in spoken Jordanian Arabic, albeit with a different word order. In (5.30) it has a negative

$^{39}$ The mouthing “fi”, which normally accompanies the headnod, is difficult to see in the video clip of this example.
possessive meaning, and in (5.31) it functions as a clause negator. Other examples of NEG-EXIST as a clause negator are found in Chapter 4.3.1.

(5.29) PROBLEM NEG-EXIST
“There is no problem.”

(5.30) INDEX₁ EXIST FISH NEG-EXIST INDEX₃
“I have a fish and she doesn’t.”

(5.31) SIBLING SAY INDEX₁ STEAL NEG-EXIST
“The brothers said: ‘I didn’t steal’.”

As possessives EXIST and NEG-EXIST can be used with both animate and inanimate possessors and with both alienable and inalienable possessions. Inalienable possessions include kinship terms, body-parts, and physical states. The two signs can also be used with abstract concepts, like time. Sometimes more than one construction is possible, as shown in (5.32).40

(5.32a) STOMACH PAIN INDEX₃
“Does your stomach hurt?”

(5.32b) STOMACH PAIN EXIST₂ INDEX₂
“Do you have a stomach ache?”

The distribution of use shows that constructions with EXIST can be used in more contexts than constructions with SELF. Notably they can be used with inalienable possessions like body-parts, albeit in specific contexts. Constructions with EXIST also have a wider range of meaning than attributive or ‘belong’ constructions involving SELF. Thus, a sentence like INDEX₁ CAR EXIST can mean that the signer owns a car, but also, depending on the context, that the signer has borrowed a car for a period of time.

There does not appear to be a strict word order in possessive ‘have’ constructions in LIU. Most frequently, the possessor comes first as subject of the sentence, followed by the possessum and then the sign EXIST or NEG-EXIST. If the possessor is a pronoun, however, it often follows the sign (NEG-) EXIST or is repeated at the end, particularly in questions, as in (5.25) and (5.32).

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40 Note the difference between the scope of the yes/no question marking in the two examples. More research is needed in order to determine the rules governing the scope of non-manual question marking in LIU.
Cross-linguistically, there has been much emphasis on the relationship between locationals, existentials and possessives in both spoken languages (cf. Freeze 1992) and sign languages (Kristoffersen (2003) for DSL; Perniss and Zeshan (forthcoming a) for a variety of sign languages). In general, it appears that the relationship between locationals, existentials and possessives is very prominent in sign languages. In LIU this is evidenced by the sign EXIST, which is phonologically similar to the locational HERE and can have both existential and possessive meaning. Interestingly, existentials and possessives are also generally expressed in the same way in creole languages (Sebba 1997; Fischer 1978), such as the Arabic-based creole Nubi, mentioned above. Creoles emerge when speakers from contact languages or pidgins have children. They are the mother tongue of a new generation growing up with a pidgin. Like sign languages, creoles appear to have certain grammatical properties in common cross-linguistically, even when they derive from completely different spoken languages. Many of these grammatical properties are also common in sign languages, and some linguists have claimed that sign languages are, in fact, creoles (Fischer 1978; Deuchar 1987). However, cross-linguistic data from sign language grammars has, to my knowledge, not been combined with research into the grammar of creoles in an attempt to explain these similarities.

In some sign languages, notably the village sign languages Kata Kolok and AdaSL there is a great deal of ambiguity in these constructions, since locationals, existentials and possessives can all be expressed by means of pointing signs. Examples of these three uses in Kata Kolok (Perniss and Zeshan, forthcoming b) are given in (5.33).41

(5.33a) Cow pointing to location [Kata Kolok]
“Is the cow over there?” (loc.) OR “Are there cows over there?” (exist.)

(5.33b) Cow pointing to third person possessor
“Does s/he have (a) cow(s)?” OR “Is it her/his cow?” (poss.)

Example (5.33a) can have both a locational and an existential reading. There does not appear to be a structural difference between the two. Additionally, the possessive structure in (5.33b) is structurally very similar. The possessive reading is arrived at by contextual clues, namely that the signer

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41 Note that the glosses in these examples are taken from Perniss and Zeshan (forthcoming b) and have not been adapted.
points at a person, rather than a location. Note that (5.33b) can be interpreted as either a predicative or an attributive possessive construction.

The examples from Kata Kolok are unusual in their considerable ambiguity. In most (urban) sign languages there appear to be more clearly designated structures for existence and possession. In a large number of sign languages from all around the world, possessive constructions are derived from existential constructions, as they are in LIU (Perniss and Zeshan, forthcoming a). The main difference between the two structures in these languages is the presence of a possessor argument in possessive constructions. This appears to be the most common pattern found for possessive constructions in sign languages. In some sign languages, such as CSL, USL and Brazilian Sign Language, the existential sign can be inflected spatially. Spatial inflection is also attested in LIU (5.27), although it does not appear to be a very productive process and may in fact be the result of assimilation to a following pronoun.

Some sign languages have more than one verb that can be used in ‘have’ constructions. Often, at least one of these is based on an existential. NS, for example, has three different verbs that can be used in possessive constructions. The sign HOLD can be employed to express ownership or physical possession (the latter implying that an object is with its possessor at the time of speaking). This verb can only be used for concrete inanimate objects. Apart from this sign, there are also two types of existential verbs, EXIST-animate and EXIST-unmarked, which are used in possessive constructions. The former is used for kinship relationships and can also be translated as “live” or “stay” while the latter is used for various types of possessive relationships, including abstract nouns, states and conditions, inalienable possessions, such as body parts, and alienable concrete objects not necessarily in the physical possession of their owner at the time of speaking (Morgan, forthcoming). Likewise, Venezuelan Sign Language (Lengua de Señas Venezolana, LSV) has three different signs that can be used to express possession in predicative constructions. The verb HAVE1 is used with personal property that is not with the possessor at the time of speaking, whereas the pronominal form POSS-IX is used to indicate property that is present with the possessor. The existential particle EXIST can be used for possessions that are near the possessor but not in his/her immediate power. In addition, another verb HAVE2 is used in existential constructions when a location is emphasized (Ravelo, forthcoming). Whereas in NS the nature of the possessum (abstract vs. concrete, animate vs. inanimate) determines which possessive item is used, the LSV data suggest that the possessive structure is determined by the amount of immediate control that a possessor has over the possessum. Thus, sign languages differ in the number
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of possessive verbs they have and the amount of semantic differentiation expressed by these possessive verbs.

Among the negative ‘have’ constructions, suppletive forms like NEG-EXIST in LIU are common in sign languages. Although negative existentials may be suppletive in spoken languages (e.g. Turkish var “there is” versus yok “there is not”), their use appears to be more common in sign languages. In ASL, for instance, the suppletive sign NONE is used most frequently for negative possession (Chen Pichler and Hochgesang, forthcoming), and USL has a negative suppletive form PA, glossed after its accompanying mouth-pattern (Lutalo, forthcoming). On the other hand, VGT negates the verb HAVE with a negative sign and a non-manual headshake (Vermeerbergen and DeWeerdt, forthcoming), as does ÖGS (Schalber and Hunger, forthcoming). The USL negative existential PA is very similar to the sign NEG-EXIST in LIU in that it is not only a negative possessive and existential, but can also negate other verbs. In contrast to NEG-EXIST in LIU, however, PA can co-occur with the verb HAVE, as in HAVE PA meaning “not have”, as well as replace it. It cannot be used with abstract nouns, like “time”. It also implies temporary absence of possession as “I don’t have at the moment”, which is not the case for the LIU sign NEG-EXIST. USL has another suppletive form, glossed NONE, which, like PA, can negate possession, existence and other verbs. However, NONE indicates a permanent lack of possession and can be used with abstract nouns, as well as with concrete nouns referring to large objects (Lutalo, forthcoming). Like LIU, Kata Kolok has one negative sign that can be used both in negative possessive constructions and as a clause negator. This negative sign, however, appears to have a wider meaning than NEG-EXIST in LIU, because it can also be used as a negative imperative (Perniss and Zeshan, forthcoming b). LIU appears to be unusual, albeit not unique (cf. Zeshan (2000b) for IPSL), in that it has a possessive sign used in ‘have’ constructions that is also used in emphatic or assertive constructions.

5.4.2.2 ‘Have’ constructions with modified nouns

When a possessed item is modified, that is, additional information is given about it in the form of an adjective or a numeral, a different structure than the one described in the previous section is used in LIU. For example, a declarative possessive construction containing a numerically quantified possessum does not require the possessive EXIST, as illustrated in example (5.34). Similarly, EXIST is not used in interrogatives with a quantifying question word, like HOW-MANY, as in example (5.35).
Jordanian Sign Language: Aspects of grammar from a cross-linguistic perspective

(5.34) FATHER SIBLING THIRTEEN INDEX₃
"Her father has thirteen siblings."

(5.35) INDEX₂ SIBLING GIRL HOW-MANY
"How many sisters do you have?"

If EXIST is used in a statement like (5.34), it is no longer merely possessive, but adds emphatic/assertive meaning. A signer would utter the sentence in (5.36) only if he thought the addressee was denying the truth of the statement in (5.34).

(5.36) FATHER SIBLING THIRTEEN EXIST INDEX₃
"Her father does have thirteen siblings."

However, if a signer wants to ask a question like “Does your father have thirteen children?”, in order to check the truth of previously obtained information, the sign EXIST can be used.

Adjectives modifying a possessed item function in the same way as numerals. Thus in (5.37) EXIST is absent; if it were present, it could only have emphatic/assertive meaning.

(5.37) MOTHER APRON PINK DARK
"The mother has a purple apron."

Actually, just like example (5.8), constructions like (5.37) are ambiguous between a predicative and an attributive reading, since attributive possessive constructions in LIU can also be realized by this kind of simple juxtaposition (Section 5.3.3). Thus, the translation of (5.37) could equally be: “The mother’s apron is purple.” There is no way to distinguish between these two readings, since no overt possessive item is present.

LIU is not unusual in this respect. It is very common for sign languages not to use an overt possessive item in a predicative clause when the possessum is modified (Perniss and Zeshan, forthcoming a). However, in some sign languages, like ÖGS, a possessive item can be used in a construction with a modified possessum, apparently without emphatic meaning, as example (5.38) from Schalber and Hunger (forthcoming) shows. The sign DA, which functions as a possessive element in this example, is similar to LIU EXIST in that it can also be used with existential meaning. The corresponding German word da means “here” and cannot be used in possessive constructions.

42 The pointing sign is actually made with the thumb in this example.
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(5.38) IX₁ DREI COMPUTER DA [ÖGS]

I three computer have

“I have three computers.”

In LIU, a sentence like (5.38) would be used emphatically, either for contrastive purposes (“in contrast to you, I have three computers”) or to affirm something that the addressee might not believe (“I do have three computers”). In VGT (Vermeerbergen and DeWeerdt, forthcoming) HAVE occurs with modified possessums, but it can also be left out. Chen Pichler and Hochgesang (forthcoming) found that when HAVE was dropped in ASL predicative constructions, this occurred usually with quantified kinship terms, for example in “he has four children”. In contrast, however, HAVE in ASL does not usually occur with body-parts, but may occur with body parts when they are modified, as in “she has beautiful hair”. In LSC (Quer and GRIN, forthcoming) the existential verb predominantly occurs between the possessum and its modifier. Thus, although the pattern used in LIU is very common, there are several sign languages in which the verb that is used in unmodified ‘have’ constructions is also used when the possessum is modified. LIU seems to be the only sign language found to date in which constructions with modified possessums and an overt possessive element are claimed to be emphatic.

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown that there are two basic constructions for the expression of possession in LIU. The first construction uses the sign SELF in either an attributive or predicative position. When SELF is used in attributive position in possessive constructions, it is translated as a possessive pronoun. When it is used in predicative position, I have translated it as ‘belong’. The second construction is a ‘have’ construction involving the sign EXIST or its negative counterpart NEG-EXIST. The construction with SELF is more limited in scope than the one with EXIST, as it cannot be used for temporary possession or for inalienable relationships. The exception to this generalization is kinship, which is marked as inalienable in many languages, but appears to form a separate class in LIU.

A third type of possessive construction in LIU does not involve any overt possessive marker. Rather, it involves the juxtaposition of two items in an attributive possessive relationship, or the use of a personal pronoun instead of the more specialized possessive/emphatic pronoun SELF. Similarly, no overt possessive item is required in ‘have’ constructions in which the
possessum is modified. These constructions occur mostly with inalienable nouns, but can also be used non-emphatically with alienable nouns.

There is an interesting parallel between \textsc{exist} and \textsc{self} in that neither of the two signs is limited to possessive constructions, and they can both be used with emphatic meaning. It seems that when both the absence and the presence of a possessive marker are grammatical, constructions with an overt possessive marker are more emphatic than those without. This suggests that possessive constructions with an overt possessive marker are marked compared to those without such a form.

Cross-linguistically, there are some striking similarities between possessive and existential constructions in different sign languages. Thus, constructions with no overt possessive markers are quite common in many sign languages, particularly in attributive possessive constructions and in predicative constructions with a modified possessum. Another similarity is that most sign languages appear to derive the possessive verb used in ‘have’ constructions from an existential particle or verb, a grammaticalization pattern that is also common, albeit not to the same extent, in spoken languages. It is a particularly common construction also in creoles, which, more generally, appear to share several grammatical properties with sign languages. The use of a possessive pronoun as a predicative element in ‘belong’ constructions, the so-called possessive substantive, is very common across sign languages, but not so common in spoken languages. Generally, however, the sign languages that have been described so far do not appear to employ possessive constructions that are not attested in spoken languages.

One way of expressing the possessive relationship that is particular to spatial-visual languages is the use of spatial marking. Thus, some sign languages can mark possessive relationships by spatial modulation of the sign for the possessum or by spatially inflecting a possessive item. Possessive pronouns are commonly inflected spatially, too, in the same way as personal pronouns are. The non-manual headnod strategy, which is found in LIU informal signing, is also modality specific.

Differences between possessive constructions in sign languages can be found, for instance, in the number of possessive elements that are available in a given sign language. Thus, Russian Sign Language has three possessive pronouns, whereas a language like AdaSL does not have a dedicated possessive pronoun at all. Similarly, a language like NS has three possessive verbs that are used with different kinds of possessions in ‘have’ constructions, whereas other sign languages have only one, or simply use juxtaposition. There are also differences with respect to the use of an overt possessive item in constructions with a modified possessum, and in the way negative possession is expressed. In many sign languages a suppletive form serves as a negative possession marker, but in some sign languages
possessive constructions are negated in the same way as other clauses. Some aspects of possessive constructions in sign languages, for example, the order of the possessor and the possessum in attributive constructions, may be influenced by the word order of the surrounding spoken language. In other respects, there are important differences between sign languages and the spoken languages that are used in the same area. Thus, the use of \textsc{exist} in possessive constructions in LIU is different from the use of the existential particle \textit{fi} in both spoken Jordanian Arabic and MSA. Similarly, the particle \textit{da} can be used in possessive constructions in ÖGS, but the word \textit{da} cannot be used in possessive constructions in German.

In sum, the possessive constructions in LIU have much in common with those of other sign languages. The use of one pronoun functioning as both an intensifier and a possessive marker appears to be cross-linguistically rare, at least for spoken languages. However, sufficient data is not available yet in order to determine whether possessive pronouns and intensifiers are more commonly expressed by the same sign in sign languages. One interesting feature which, to my knowledge, has only been described for LIU and IPSL is the fact that both the possessive pronoun \textsc{self} and the possessive/existential marker \textsc{exist} can be used with emphatic meaning.