

Body parts and possessive constructions in Mataguayan languages

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12.1 Introduction

All languages have a set of lexemes naming body parts and organs (Enfield 2006; Enfield et al. 2006; Staden and Majid 2006). The body parts may be conceived as inherently related extensions of their wholes, as can also happen with kinship terms, since they imply relationships between individuals, and with personal objects in relation to their owners. This semantic information usually has a grammatical expression in languages.

Languages that classify nouns as alienable versus inalienable, as Mataguayan languages do, express this distinction in their morphology or syntax. The Mataguayan language family, which comprises Chorote or Manjuy (Cho), Maka (Ma), Nivaçle (Ni), and Wichi (Wi), is head-marking, which means that the possessor–possessed relationship is marked on the noun denoting the possessed entity. In this chapter we analyze possessive constructions involving a group of roots designating body parts in Mataguayan languages. Primary data were obtained in communities located in Argentina and Paraguay (Nivaçle), and Argentina and Bolivia (Wichi) over more than a decade. Sources of secondary data used in this study include published grammars and vocabularies of the four languages: Gerzenstein (1978) and Carol (2014 [2012]) for Chorote; Gerzenstein (1994, 1999, 2015 [2000]) for Maka; Stell (1987) and Fabre (2016) for Nivaçle; and Terraza (2009) and Nercesian (2014 [2011]) for Wichi.

Mataguayan languages exhibit a single paradigm to designate the possessor for all nouns, including body-part terms. However, those that refer to body parts do not behave as a homogenous class: a small group of nominal roots adds *t(V)*-between the possessor prefix and the root, regardless of whether the roots are cognates or not. In Chorote and Maka, this same prefix is found in some body-part terms; however, Gerzenstein (2015 [2000]) analyzes it as part of the inalienable root in Chorote (e.g. *t'ate* ‘eye’). Our analysis is that the same cases in the sister

languages Nivačle and Wichi, and presumably likewise in Chorote and Maka, can very likely be parsed as ‘POSS-*t(V)*-root’, where POSS may be zero in the third person, as illustrated in (1a). We hold that this morpheme historically helped to distinguish body-part terms from the rest of the inalienable nouns. Interestingly, a formally similar prefix *t(V)*- is also used with agentive monovalent verbs referring to activities in which one of the body parts or the entire body is often involved (1b).

Wichi

(1)

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| a. \emptyset -ta-kolo ¹ | b. n ³ -t ³ -’ek |
| 3POSS-CLF.BP-leg | 1SUJ-CLF.VBL.INTR-eat |
| ‘his/her leg’ | ‘I eat’ |

Many other verbs whose only argument is an experiencer also take *t(V)*- between the root and the subject prefix in Nivačle and Wichi (Nercesian 2014[2011]: 164; e.g. ‘kneel’, ‘give one’s back to’, ‘whistle’). Note the presence of *t-* between the pronominal prefix and the root in examples (2a,b):

Nivačle

(2)

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. \emptyset -t-oich’a | b. lh-t-’ac’asin |
| 3POSS-CLF.BP-leg | 2SUJ-CLF.VBL.INTR-sneeze |
| ‘his/her leg’ | ‘You sneeze.’ |

Even when the body part and the bodily activity are not designated by the same root, there are semantic similarities that could explain the presence of *t(V)*- in both groups of stems. The sister languages Chorote and Maka show a similar construction with *t(V)*- on verbal roots. In Nivačle, the segment /t/ was previously analyzed either as a separate third-person morpheme or as part of the prefix in the entire pronominal paradigm (Stell 1987: 182; Fabre 2016: 133).

In this chapter we propose that this morpheme was not originally part of the pronominal prefix or of the root. The semantic and functional opacity that this prefix exhibits synchronically in some nouns designating body parts is what motivated other authors to parse it in several of these constructions in the four languages as a pronominal prefix, as part of a pronominal prefix, or as part of the root, rather than as a separate morpheme (Gerzenstein 1978 and Carol 2014 [2012] for Chorote; Gerzenstein 1994, 1999, 2015 [2000] for Maka; Stell 1989 and Fabre 2016 for Nivačle; Terraza 2009 for Wichi). Here we propose a different scenario that explains why this was historically a separate morpheme. We will also discuss whether both *t(V)*-morphemes, one that occurs with body-part roots and the other with monovalent agentive verbal roots, could have had the same origin.

We have therefore organized the discussion around three main questions:

¹ In examples from secondary sources, we have kept the original orthographic transcriptions and morphological parsing. In cases where we have proposed a different segmentation, this is specified in the text. In Table 12.1 Mataguanan body-part cognates are presented in phonemic transcription.

1. Why do we propose that **t(V)-* may be analyzed as a separate morpheme in the four languages?
2. What does **t(V)-* encode in the morphological structure of the possessed nouns designating body parts and what could have been its original function?
3. Could there have been any historical relation between **t(V)-* that occurs on nominal root structures and **t(V)-* that occurs on verbal root structures?

This chapter is organized in four sections. Section 12.2 deals with the language family and its body-part vocabulary. Section 12.3 describes possessive constructions having a nominal root and sets forth the research problem involving words designating body parts. In section 12.4 we argue—on the basis of morphological and phonological evidence—for the status of **t(V)-* as a separate morpheme, despite the semantic opacity it displays in current languages. We also discuss its meaning and its relation to the verbal morpheme *t(V)-*. Finally, in section 12.5, we present our conclusions.

The association of the possessive construction with *t(V)-* and verbs taking *t(V)-* before the root has not been considered previously in the descriptions of Mataguayan languages. In this sense, our study aims to contribute to our knowledge of diachronic morphosyntax and to the discussion of lexical classes in this language family.

12.2 The Mataguayan language family

‘Mataguayan’ (Najlis 1984; Fabre 2008 [2005]) is an alternative name given to the language family also known in the literature as Mataco-Mataguayo (Tovar 1964), Mataco-Maka (Braunstein and Miller 1999), or ‘Mataco’ (in English, Matacoan; Campbell and Grondona 2012).

Data gathered in the Argentine National Census (INDEC 2004–5) indicate that there are approximately 2,613 Chorote speakers, 29,066 Wichi speakers, and 553 Nivaçle speakers (referred to in the census as “Chulupí,” a term the Nivaçle people today consider pejorative). The official Paraguayan census (DGEEC 2012) mentions 14,768 Nivaçle speakers (located in the departments of Boquerón and Presidente Hayes), 582 Chorote speakers, and 1,888 Maka speakers. According to Unicef (2017), the Wichi population in Bolivia is 3,945. These four ethnic groups are settled in the South American Gran Chaco region, which spans part of south-east Bolivia, reaches northward to the southwestern area of Mato Grosso in Brazil, and spreads to the westernmost area of Paraguay and down to the northeast of Argentina in the south, as shown in Figure 12.1.

Mataguayan languages comprise multiple dialects, although communication between speakers of the same language is not hindered by this factor. For Wichi



Fig. 12.1 Geographical distribution of the Mataguayan languages

(as it is known in Argentina), or Weenhayek (the name given to Wichi in Bolivia), Nercesian (2013) identifies two broad dialectal groups with the longest divergence over time: Pilcomayeño and Bermejeño, based on their historical location with respect to the Pilcomayo and Bermejo Rivers. This division is in line with that recognized by Wichi speakers. These two broad groupings are not uniform and are further broken down into ‘arribeños’ (upstream people) and ‘abajenos’ (downstream people). Some grammatical differences between the two dialects are well-known. As regards possession, these two groups differ in their first-person and indefinite-person forms, as will be shown in section 12.4. Historically, the prefix *nò-* ‘first person’ evolved as *o-* in Pilcomayeño and *n’-* in Bermejeño, and the indefinite person is *nò-* for the first group and *to-* for the second.

Within the Mataguayan language family, Tovar (1964) proposes that the two most closely related languages are Wichi and Chorote, which share 50% of their basic vocabulary, while Wichi and Nivačle have 33% of their vocabulary in common,

and Wichi and Maka share only 20%. Maka and Nivačle, however, have 43% of their basic vocabulary in common, which could be attributed to the contact with other Chaco languages (although Tovar did not specify which these are). Fabre (2005: 3) holds that the Maka materials Tovar had access to at the time were deficient. It is worth noting that Tovar's study was conducted more than fifty years ago and no revision of his proposal has been made since then. According to Fabre (2005: 2–3, cf. Figure 12.2), Nivačle and Maka would constitute one branch of the Mataguayan language family, while Wichi and Chorote would belong to another branch. However, Fabre draws attention to the need to re-evaluate the location of Chorote within the family, since, if certain relevant grammatical traits are considered, this language is closer to Maka and Nivačle, which would imply that Wichi would have a longer time of divergence from the rest of the Mataguayan languages. Here, we assume the by now long-established relationship among Mataguayan languages (cf. Najlis 1984; Viegas Barros 2002; apart from Tovar 1964) without discussing the existence of subgroups within this language family (Figure 12.2).

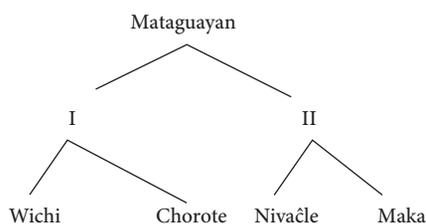


Fig. 12.2 Internal classification of the Mataguayan language family

This diagram shows the first speculative grouping of the Mataguayan languages into two main branches (according to Fabre 2005), their intermediate stages and the dating of divergences are unknown to date. In the horizontal axis, the order of the languages follows the degree of proximity among Mataguayan languages (according to the lexicostatistics study by Tovar 1964).

The category of possession in Chaco languages has awakened the interest of several linguists over recent decades, though there remain some open issues. No studies have been conducted on the topic of alienable/inalienable classes and subclasses in each language from a phylogenetic perspective. This chapter constitutes a first step in that direction.

The body-part terms shown in Table 12.1 were selected from Gerzenstein (2021a,b) for the Chorote and Maka languages, and from our fieldwork for Nivačle (Vidal 2012–18) and Wichi (Nercesian 2003–18). Table 12.1 is organized in alphabetical order by language, and, in the case of Wichi, dialectal variants are shown if they exist (Pilcomayeño=‘Pyo’ and Bermejeño=‘Bjo’). In all cases, these are bound, inalienable forms.

The focus of this chapter is the morpheme glossed as ‘CLF.BP’ in examples (1) and (2) that occurs with nouns designating body parts. In Table 12.1 body-part terms exhibit *t-* or *ta-* at the beginning of many of these roots or bases. According to our analysis (Nercesian 2014 [2011]), in Wichi we parsed the prefix form *t-* or

Table 12.1 A non-exhaustive list of body-part terms

Gloss	Chorote	Maka	Nivačle	Wichi
liver	-kaxlek ~ -kʷaxlek (m.)	-akʰik	-akaxʰak	-tanek (Pyo) -tonek (Bjo)
kidney	-kʷentiyeʔ ~ -sʷentiyeʔ (f.)	-atʔinxexʔ	-ʃanantiya	-čintoway (Pyo) -katente (Bjo)
stomach	-akxiwet	-kutxii	-kʰapo	-nipiʃ (Pyo) -tšé (Bjo)
waist	-kʷoy- xiwolkakiʔ	-kɛluci-wet	-kaklɔʔkʰišam	-sulak (Pyo) -xelak (Bjo)
testicle	-kemiʔ	-kɛtɛʔ	-kanʃi	-čanis (Pyo) -čonis (Bjo)
vagina	-towexe ~ -tʷowexe		-fɛʃtʃeyiʃ	-su (Pyo) -se (Bjo)
body	-fʷes (m.)	-ax	-sxaʔn	tʰisanyax (Pyo) tʰisan (Bjo)
face	-tokʷoʔ ~ -tʷokʷoʔ (m.)	-xus	-tako	ta-tey
forehead	-tokʷo-ceʔ (m.)	-itkoyek ~ -otkoyek	-tako	ta-čóʔ
eyebrows	-tokʷo-seʔ ~ -tʷokʷo-seʔ	-itkosiʔ ~ -otkosiʔ	-tʰipaclas (pl.)	ta-tečasey (Pyo), ta-tečusey (Bjo)
eyelid	-tate-tax (f.)	-(e)kʰuc- kʰucitaɣ	-tasex ʃa- pʷoʔt	ta-tetʰax (Pyo), ta-teʃu tʰoɣ (Bjo)
eye	-tateʔ (f.)	-toʔ	-tasex	ta-teʃo (Pyo), ta-teʃu (Bjo)
eyelashes	-taseʔ ~ -tʷeseʔ	-teciʔ	-tatsey	ta-tefʷis
chest, thorax	-ot (f.)	-exuyix	-oot	t-ʔokʷe (Pyo), t-ʔukʷe (Bjo)
nipple	tʰ-ateʔ ~ -eteʔ (f.)	wit-ekʰutiʔ ʃa-pas	-axte	t-ʰatewʰo (Pyo), t-ʰate lapes (Bjo)
arms	-fʷopoʔ	-koy	-tʰuk	ta-kʷey

It was mostly considered as part of the pronominal prefix, configuring a specific paradigm for this small group, as will be seen later.

ta-; for Chorote and Nivačle, data supplied by Gerzenstein (2021a), Seelwische and Stell (2021) show that only some roots start with *t(V)-*, which is not attested in the case of Maka. Only if *t(V)-* is considered as part of the root will this form be found in the body terms in Table 12.1.

For instance, in Table 12.1, the *t(V)-* form in the root for ‘chest’ must be identified as a prefix, because it does not appear as a part of the root in Chorote and Nivačle, although it is certainly attested in Wichi. A similar case is attested for the Chorote inalienable root *tateʔ* ‘eye’. We do not know whether *ta-* is part of the root or not, although if it is compared with its cognate form in the other languages of the family, *ta-* seems to be a separate morpheme. In the case of ‘nipple’ it is not

clear whether the segmentation proposed for Chorote indicates that it is the prefix or the inalienable root *-eteʔ* alternating with the form without *t(V)*-. Likewise, according to Gerzenstein (1994), in Maka the root for ‘nipple’ begins with *wit-*, the indefinite possessive prefix that contains *t-* as a part.

Before going into the discussion of the forms of the prefixes and roots in the four languages, in section 12.3 we aim to explain how possession is encoded with alienable and inalienable nouns.

12.3 (In)alienability in Mataguayan languages

Inalienability denotes a binding connection between two entities—a permanent, inherent association between possessor and possessed. Conversely, the supplementary notion of alienability refers to a variety of relatively free associations between two referents; that is, less inherently permanent relationships (Chappell and McGregor 1996: 4). According to *The World Atlas of Language Structures* (Dryer and Haspelmath 2013), the formal distinction between alienable and inalienable possession is not widespread around the world, and in only forty-three of 244 sampled languages does obligatory possession marking occur on inalienable nouns (cf. Bickel and Nichols 2013). This phenomenon is therefore a curiosity in linguistics, as well as in other related disciplines, such as psycholinguistics and anthropology. The distinct marking of alienable and inalienable possession is a clear example of the recognition of different types of bonds between linguistic, cognitive, and cultural categories, considering that certain relationships are marked as more closely connected to the possessor. It is therefore expected that inalienable relations will not require any indication other than the presence of the obligatory possessive affix, while alienable relations are expected to have an additional indication, as is the case in Mataguayan and other Chaco languages. Hence, additional affixes or possessive classifiers appear with alienable nouns, not only distinguishing them from inalienable nouns, but also marking a distinction within the alienable class itself.

Inalienable possession is a characteristic feature of the languages spoken in the Chaco region. Based on a comparison of four languages (Pilaga, Tapiete, Vilela, and Wichi) from four different, but geographically close, language families, Comrie et al. (2010) noted that, for the grammatical category of possession, person affixes for possessors in nouns show total or partial formal similitudes with verbal affixes for subject and/or object participants. The alienable/inalienable semantic distinction is likewise present in the four languages, as is the use of nominal classifiers designating inalienable entities (see also Fabre 2007).

Mataguayan languages display a single set of personal forms for all nouns, including those designating body parts. The most strongly marked difference between alienable and inalienable forms is that the former require the addition of a

possessive classifier, either *ka-*‘POSS.CLF1’, a general classifier, or *lo-* ‘POSS.CLF2’ for domestic animals, between the pronominal prefix and the nominal root, as can be seen in (3)–(6). Golluscio (1993: 230) called this morpheme a ‘marker of aptitude for being possessed’ for Wichi, and Fabre (2007: 74) called it ‘neutral possessive classifier’ for Nivaçle and other Chaco languages. Note in (5) that the Maka prefix *qe-* is an allomorph of *ka-*:

Nivaçle

- (3) *kaki-ka-tajex*
 1PL.POSS-POSS.CLF1-shaman
 ‘our shaman’

Wichi

- (4) *n’-ka-hele*
 1POSS-POSS.CLF1-bag
 ‘my bag’

Maka (Gerzenstein 1994: 149)

- (5) *ye-qe-nek*
 1POSS-POSS.CLF1-spoon
 ‘my spoon’

Chorote (Carol 2014 [2012]: 364)

- (6) *ji-ka-wonta*
 1POSS-POSS.CLF1-hat
 ‘his hat’

On the other hand, the possessive prefix in inalienable nouns is added directly to the root, as shown in (7)–(10):

Nivaçle

- (7) a. *ji-mimi*
 1POSS-mother
 ‘my mother’
 b. *ji-pakla*
 1POSS-bracelet
 ‘my bracelet’

Wichi

- (8) a. *n’-ku*
 1POSS-mother
 ‘my mother’
 b. *n’-lamis*
 1POSS-necklace
 ‘my necklace’

Maka (Gerzenstein 1994: 148)

- (9) yi-noki?
 1POSS-elbow
 'my elbow'

Chorote (Carol 2014 [2012]: 364)

- (10) ji-ntʔik
 1POSS-grandfather
 'my grandfather'

In (7b) and (8b) and in (7a), (8a), and (10), the lexemes encode personal objects used on the body and kinship relationships, respectively, two semantic fields in which nouns are often classified as inalienable.

Another semantic group within the inalienable class consists of body-part terms (including outer and inner parts, fluids and secretions). In a handful of body-part terms, the prefix *t(a)-* ~ *t'(a)-* is inserted between the root and the possessor marking, as happens with 'my arm' in (11b), but with 'my head' in (11a) the prefix is not attested.

Nivaçle

- (11) a ji-fatesh
 1POSS-head
 'my head'
 b ji-tʔ-uk
 1POSS-CLF.BP-arm
 'my arm'

The same can be noted in Wichi. The possessive prefix is attached directly to the noun for 'nose' (12a,b) in both dialects, but to say 'my leg', *t-* is added between the prefix and the root (12c,d):

Wichi

- (12) a. n'-nhes (Bjo) b. o-nhus (Pyo)
 1POSS-nose 1POSS-nose
 'my nose' 'my nose'
 c. n'-t-kolo (Bjo) d. o-t-kälä (Pyo)
 1POSS-CLF.BP-leg 1POSS-CLF.BP-leg
 'my leg' 'my leg'

In Chorote and Maka, a few body-part terms also take *t-* between the pronominal prefix and the root; although Gerzenstein (2015 [2000]) analyzed *t-* as part of the root in Chorote (e.g. *-t'ate* 'eye', cf. Table 12.1). Also, for Chorote, Carol (2012: 361) proposes that there are two different third-person possessive prefixes: *t'-* '3POSS' for most nouns, and *t-*, which occurs with very few inalienable roots like *t-òt* '3POSS-chest', lit. 'his/her chest'.

Moreover, for Nivačle, Fabre (2016) lists *t'a-/t'*- '3POSS' as alternative forms of *lh-/lha-* '3POSS', as shown in (13).

Nivačle (Fabre 2016: 82)

- (13) *tʔa-tʔakletʃ*
 3POSS-tongue
 'his tongue'

In sum, synchronically, *t(V)-* has been reanalyzed as part of the stem, part of the pronominal prefix form for first, second, and third person or as a pronominal third-person prefix in the four languages. However, we argue that it was not historically part of the stem nor the bound possessive pronoun. Contrary to other analyses of *t(a)- ~ t'(a)-* in the literature on Mataguan languages, we propose that it was a separate morpheme (rightmost column in Table 12.2), instead of part of the root, as in *tateʔ* 'eye' in Chorote (second column from the left), or part of the pronominal prefix, or the third-person possessive prefix (as proposed for Chorote by Gerzenstein and Carol, for Nivačle by Stell and for Wichi by Terraza, third and fourth columns from the left):

In our view, *t(V)-* can very likely be parsed (diachronically) as a separate morpheme {POSS-*t(V)*-Root}, where POSS can be zero in the third person, in a group of inalienable nouns in the four Mataguan languages. We propose that nouns denoting body parts in Mataguan languages can be divided in two groups, according to the presence/absence of the prefix *t(a)- ~ t'(a)-*, as shown in (14a,b):

- (14)
- a. POSS-*t(V)*-Nominal root (e.g. *yi-t-uuk* 'my arm' (Ni), *n'-t-kwe* 'my arm' (Wi))
 - b. POSS-Nominal root (e.g. *yi-wo* 'my neck'(Ni), *n'-w'u* 'my neck' (Wi))

As shown above, the body-part terms in the four languages are configured differently from the rest of the inalienable nouns. The prefix *t(V)-* has been kept as a productive morpheme in Wichi, to a greater extent than in the sister languages, (cf. Table 12.1). In section 12.4 we will propose an analysis for the morphological structure of inalienable nouns referring to the body parts whose possessive constructions have been formalized, as in (14), and present our organization of the possessive-prefix paradigms. This involves tracking similar examples in the four languages and reviewing the analyses proposed for these constructions by previous authors. We will likewise provide a plausible historical explanation for the grammatical patterns that we have observed in the four Mataguan languages synchronically.

12.4 The nominal bases {*t(V)*-+ Root}

One hypothesis we propose in connection with the *t(V)*- possessive paradigms, suggested by most of the analyses conducted on the Mataguayan languages and varieties, is that /*t(V)*/ is, in fact, an independent morpheme, which probably displayed greater productivity in previous stages of these languages. The first consequence of this statement is that there would be neither possessive paradigms “with /*t(V)*/” and “without /*t(V)*/,” as suggested by Terraza (2009) for Wichi, nor a distinction between allomorphs “with /*t(V)*/” and “without /*t(V)*/” as has been proposed for Chorote (Carol 2014 [2012]), Maka (Gerzenstein 1994), and Nivačle (Stell 1987; Fabre 2016), but rather a single paradigm for possessive prefixes which would not include the /*t(V)*-/ form.

The second consequence is that this morpheme would be related to the meaning of the root instead of establishing distinctions in the possessive person paradigm (i.e. it establishes some type of nominal classification which, in addition, is marked in the possessive construction).

Table 12.2 Summary of previous analyses of *t(V)*- and our hypothesis

	<i>t(V)</i> - as part of the root	<i>t(V)</i> - as part of the pronominal prefix of first and/or second person	<i>t(V)</i> - as a pronominal prefix of third person	<i>t(V)</i> - as classifier for body parts (our analysis)
Cho	t'ate 'eye' Gerzenstein (2015 [2000])		t-'ot '3Poss- chest' Carol (2012: 361)	ø-t(V)-'ate 'his/her eye' ø-t(V)-'ot 'his/her chest'
Ma		wit-ekfuti? 'nipple (belonging to someone)' Gerzenstein (2015 [2000])		wi-t(V)-ekfuti? 'nipple (belonging to someone)'
Ni		vat-axusxan 'gum (belonging to someone)' (Stell 1987: 186)	t'-ulhu 'his/her urine' (Stell 1987: 184)	va-t(V)-axusxan 'gum (belonging to someone)' ø-t(V)-'ulhu 'his/her urine'
Wi		nt-kwey 'my hand' (Terraza 2009: 69)	ta-kwey 'his/her hand' (Terraza 2009: 69)	n-t(V)-kwey 'my hand' ø-ta-kwey 'his/her hand'

As shown in section 12.2, the existence of a possessive paradigm with *t(V)*- or exceptional forms of the paradigm with *t(V)*- was claimed for the four Mataguayan languages. For Nivaçle (Stell 1987: 182; Fabre 2016: 133), *t'(a)*- was segmented as a third-person marker and *vat(a)*- and *vat'(a)*- as an indefinite-person marker, as shown in Table 12.3 and in examples (15)–(18).

Table 12.3 Nivaçle possessive prefixes (Stell 1987; Fabre 2016)

person	bound forms
1 SG	y(i)-
2 SG	∅- ~ a-
3 SG	lh(a)- / t'(a)-
1 PL. INCL.	cas- ~ cats(i)- ~ cats'(i)-
INDEF	vat(a)- ~ vat'(a)- / n(a)- / tin- ~ tn- / ya- ~ yi(n)-

Stell (1987:184) mentions that the third-person form is *lh-* and adds six “exceptions” where the third-person possessor form is *t'-* or *t'a-*. Nominal roots are ‘taste’, ‘pus’, ‘urine’, ‘flesh’, ‘arm’, and ‘footprint’.

Nivaçle

- (15) t'-ulhu ‘his/her urine’ (Stell 1987: 184)
 (16) t'a-sxan ‘his/her flesh’ (Stell 1987: 184)
 (17) vat-axusxan ‘gum (belonging to someone)’ (Stell 1987: 186)
 (18) vata-fxux lhap'òt ‘toenail (belonging to someone)’ (Stell 1987: 186)

Since we do not consider that *t(V)*- is part of the pronominal possessive prefix, our parsing of a body-part term like ‘thigh’ in Nivaçle (19) is different from Stell’s proposal in (18).

Nivaçle

- (19) 1POSS yi-t-òicha ‘my thigh’
 2POSS a-t-òicha ‘your thigh’
 3POSS lh-t-òicha ‘his/her thigh’
 INDEF.POSS va-t-òicha ‘somebody’s thigh’

From our perspective, the third-person possessor would therefore not be *lh(a)*- or *t'(a)*- as Stell claims, but *lh(a)*- or zero.

Similarly, for Wichì, in the upstream Bermejo dialect spoken in Rivadavia (Salta), *t(a)*- was analyzed by Terraza (2009: 69) as part of a set of possessive prefixes. As shown in Table 12.4 and illustrated in the examples in (20), paradigm 3 is characterized by the presence of *t(a)*- in the first and second persons. (The prefix *to-* has another source and marks indefinite; according to our data on Wichì, in nouns combining with *t-*, *to-* is cognate with the indefinite person *tot-*).

Table 12.4 Wichi (Bermejeño) possessive prefixes (Terraza 2009)

PERSON/ PARADIGMS	SG			PL		
	1	2	3	1	2	3
1	n- ~ nł-	n-	nt-	ła- ~ łał- (INCL) n- ~ nł- (EXCL)	ła-	ła- nt-
2	a- ~ ø-	ha-	a-	a- ~ ø-	ha-	a-
3	la- ~ ł-	la-	ta-	la- ~ ł-	la-	ta-
INDEF	to- ~ toł-	to-	to-	to-	to-	to-

Wichi (Terraza 2009: 69)

- (20) 1POSS nt-kwey 'my hand'
 2POSS a-kwey 'your hand'
 3POSS ta-kwey 'his/her hand'

In the Pilcomayo variety of Wichi, Lunt (1999) also reported the presence of *t-* in practically all the possessive forms, but analyzed it as a prefix or part of the prefix, as Terraza (2009) also did; see the examples in (21). In Lunt's words: "There is a group of dependent nouns (all connected to the body) that take the prefixes *ot-*, *a-*, *ta-*, with *lhat-* in the 1st plural inclusive person" (1999: 47).²

Wichi (Lunt 1999: 47)

- (21) a. *ot-te* 'my eye'
 b. *ot-kälä* 'my leg'
 c. *ot-kwey* 'my arm, hand'

If *t(V)-* was segmented as a separate morpheme, as shown in example (22) from our own data collected in the downstream Bermejo area, *t(V)-* would be present in the entire paradigm; and the third-person marker would be not *ta-*, but zero.

Wichi

- (22) 1POSS n'-t-kolo 'my leg'
 2POSS a-t-kolo 'your leg'
 3POSS ø-ta-kolo 'his/her leg'
 INDEF.POSS to-t-kolo 'somebody's leg'

Note in (22) that when the prefix *ta-* is preceded by a syllabic segment (a vowel or nasal) of another prefix, the vowel is deleted and *t-* remains in the coda position of the pronominal prefix (in first, second, and indefinite person). Since the third person is zero (i.e. *ø-ta-kolo* 'his/her leg'), the prefix *ta-* is not syllabically reduced. This is, probably, what gave rise to the interpretation of *ta-* as the third-person prefix, and of the entire paradigm as distinct.

² Our translation.

In Chorote, based on Gerzenstein (1978), Carol (2014 [2012]: 361) identifies a *t-* prefix as a third-person possessive marker occurring in roots starting with a glottal stop+V, as illustrated in Table 12.5. He states:

- “However, with a glottal stop, the following exceptions are found:
- The third-person possessive is *t-*: *t+’ot* → *t’ot* ‘his/her chest’
 - The indefinite possessor prefix is *n-*: *n+’ot* → *’not* ‘chest’” (Carol 2014 [2012]: 361).³

Table 12.5 Chorote possessive prefixes (Carol 2014 [2012])

PERSON	SG	PL
1	<i>i-</i> ~ <i>y(a)-</i>	<i>si-</i> ~ <i>sa-</i> ~ <i>y-</i>
2	<i>’a-</i> ~ <i>’-</i>	<i>’a-</i> ~ <i>s-</i>
3	<i>ji-</i> ~ <i>jl-</i> ~ <i>t-</i>	
INDEF	<i>in-</i> ~ <i>n-</i>	

In Gerzenstein’s description (1978: 78–9) of Chorote, the 3rd person prefix has three allomorphs: *t’-* ~ *ti-* ~ *t’a-*. The first allomorph co-occurs with roots starting with a vowel, the second on a root starting with Ci or Cj, and the third with CV_[except /i/]-initial roots.

For Maka, Gerzenstein (1994: 147) proposes that there is a possessive paradigm containing *t-* only with the indefinite person *wit-*, a cognate of the Nivačle form *vat-*, as shown in Table 12.6 and example (23).

Table 12.6 Maka possessive prefixes (Gerzenstein 1994)

PERSON	BOUND FORMS
1	<i>y(V)-</i> ~ <i>y-</i> ~ <i>∅-</i>
2	<i>V-</i> ~ <i>∅-</i>
3	<i>ʔV-</i> ~ <i>ʔ-</i>
1 PL. INCL	<i>in-</i> ~ <i>i-</i>
INDEF	<i>wit-</i> ~ <i>wi-</i> ~ <i>n-</i>

Maka (Gerzenstein 1994: 147, footnote 41)

- (23) *wit-apxusi’*
 POSS.INDF-beard
 ‘(somebody’s) beard’

³ Our translation.

The first-person 'zero' allomorph was documented in a group of names designating kinship relationships in Maka (Gerzenstein 1994: 147, footnote 42). The number of the possessor is marked by the plural suffix *-Vl*.⁴

The comparison of *t*- occurrences in possessive constructions in the Mataguan languages shows that, synchronically, Chorote and Maka retain this morpheme solely in the third-person form and in indefinite forms, respectively. On the other hand, it has a very widespread presence in Nivaçle and in Wichí. Notwithstanding this, the fact that it is present in the four languages suggests that this form might go back to Proto-Mataguan. Our hypothesis is that in some languages **t(V)*-, at least historically, has been lost as a separate morpheme. Its morphological position between the possessive prefix and the root and its proximity to the root also suggest that the development of this morpheme may be a very old phenomenon. It is reasonable to expect that this morpheme could have become grammaticalized even before the possessive prefixes.

The three following arguments have led us to support the hypothesis that **t(V)*- is a separate morpheme: a) formal similarity to the free pronouns, b) position in the morphological structure in possessive constructions, and c) syllabic reduction (which is frequent in these languages).

In the four languages, possessor prefixes seem to have originated from free pronouns; thus, if a possessive paradigm with *t(V)*- or *t'(V)*- exists, we should at least find traces of it in free pronouns. Yet free pronouns, in general, resemble paradigms without *t*-.⁵ Compare the bound possessive forms with the free pronouns listed in Table 12.7.

Regarding the second argument, the morphological structure with *t(V)*- is identical to the possessive construction of alienable nouns with possessive classifiers. Compare the possessed inalienable and alienable nouns referring to body parts with *t(V)*- or *t'(V)*- in examples (24)–(27), which are parsed following our analysis.⁶

⁴ To the series of prefixes proposed by Gerzenstein (1994) for Maka, Messineo and Gerzenstein (2007: 66) add a second series that coincides with the personal prefixes used for inactive subjects and transitive patients in this language. (This is illustrated only for the first and second persons). Notwithstanding this, examples correspond to nominal predicates, where the argument is a human in a kinship relationship with the speaker or listener (being mother, being father, or being sibling) and with other inalienable or alienable nouns. We therefore believe there is insufficient evidence to propose a second series of prefixes.

⁵ Viegas Barros (1993: 199) likewise does not acknowledge the presence of this morpheme separate from the nominal root.

⁶ Our parsing and glossing of examples (24)–(27) differ from what was proposed in the sources that the examples are taken from.

Table 12.7 Mataguyan free and bound possessive pronouns

		1 pers.	2 pers.	3 pers.	1 pers.incl	Pers.Indef
Cho	PREFIX	i- ~ y(a)-	'a- ~ '-	ji- ~ jl / t-	si- ~ sa- ~ y-	in- ~ n-
	PRO	ya'am	'a'am	jl'a'am	sa'am	<i>no data</i>
Ma	PREFIX	y(V)- ~ ø-	V- ~ ø-	IV- ~ I-	in- ~ i-	wit- ~ wi / n-
	PRO	yakha'	akha'	tsekheen	inekhewel	nakhap 'otro'
Ni	PREFIX	y(i)-	ø- ~ a-	lh(a)- / t'(a)-	cas- ~ cats(i)- ~ cats'(i)-	vat(a)- ~ vat'(a)- / n(a)- / tin- ~ tn- / ya- ~ yi(n)-
	PRO	yivaatsha	avaatsha	lhavaatsha	casvaatsha	papu 'other' 'someone'
Wi	PREFIX	n- ~ ø- ~ nI- / nt-	a- ~ ø- / ha-	la- ~ la- / ta-	la- ~ laI-	to- ~ n'o-
	PRO	nI'am ~ olham	am	lham	toI'amil/ namil	tuq 'nobody' /the 'other'

a. POSS-POSS.CLF-alienable noun

(24) Chorote

- a. ji-ka-wonta
 3POSS-CLF1-hat
 'his/her hat'

(25) Maka

- a. ye-qe-nenek
 1POSS-CLF1-spoon
 'my spoon'

(26) Nivačle

- a. kaki-ka-tajex
 1PL.POSS.CLF1-shaman
 'our shaman'

(27) Wichi

- a. n'-ka-hele
 1POSS-CLF1-yica
 'my yica (type of woven bag)'

b. POSS-t(V)-inalienable noun_[body part]

- b. ø-t'-ot
 3POSS-CLF.BP-pecho
 'his/her chest'

(Carol 2014 [2012]: 361)

- b. wi-t-apxusi'
 POSS.INDF-CLF.BP-beard
 '(someone's) beard'

(Gerzenstein 1994: 147)

- b. va-ta-jpôyich
 INDF.POSS-CLF.BP-house
 '(someone's) house'

(Fabre 2016: 84)

- b. n-t-kwey
 1POSS-CLF.BP-hand
 'my hand'

(Terraza 2009: 69)

The form *t(V)*- and the possessive classifier in inalienable nouns share the same morphological slot. It is therefore possible that at some point **t(V)*- may have had a classificatory function, distinguishing body-part terms from the rest of the inalienable nouns. A similar classification has been found in the Arawak language family (Aikhenvald 2018b), a topic that will be taken up in the following section.

The third argument (i.e. syllable reduction) explains the current condition of the **t(V)*- morpheme fused with the possessor prefix or with the root, which therefore hinders segmentation into separate morphemes synchronically. Nercesian (2014 [2011]) explained that syllabic reduction in Wichi, which may be the suppression of an entire syllable or the nucleus of a syllable, is a very frequent phonological phenomenon in fast or spontaneous speech. Moreover, in many cases, syllable reduction seems to have frozen and the derived or inflected word does not alternate with the non-reduced counterpart. Reduction of a syllable to a consonant by deleting deletion of its nucleus occurs particularly with monosyllabic prefixes. In oral texts this has been observed, for instance, with possessive prefixes, which are simplified to a single consonantal nucleus syllable /l/:

(28) Wichi

- a. la-w'u [la.'wu] ~ l-w'u [l.'wu] 'his/her neck'
- b. la-pach'u [la.pa.tʃ'u] ~ l-pach'u [l.pa.tʃ'u] 'his/her foot'
- c. la-les [la.les] ~ l-les [l.les] 'his/her children'

(Nercesian 2014 [2011]: 120)

Diachronically, this kind of syllabic reduction has been documented for the first-person subject prefix and the first-person possessive prefix. In the mid-nineteenth century, the form of this prefix was *nó-* or *n'u-*. In the twentieth century, almost one hundred years later, in the Bermejeño variety these had been reduced to the syllabic pre-gottalized nasal /'ŋ-/ and in the Pilcomayeño variety to the nasalized vowel /õ-/. We suggest that a similar process has occurred with the **t(V)*- morpheme, which led to fusion of *t-* with the possessive prefix in syllable coda position (when the root starts with a consonant with the exception of a glottal stop: *n'-t-kolo* [ʔnt.qo.lo] 'my foot') and with the root at the onset of the first syllable (when it is a glottal+vowel initial root: *la-t-ate* [la.t'a.te] 'your mother').

Note that the same segmentation (*t-ot* 'his/her chest') was proposed for Chorote by Carol (2014 [2012]: 361), with the difference that he analyzed *t-* as a third-person possessive prefix occurring with glottal-initial roots. The analysis of *t-* as a third-person possessive prefix masked the facts that in a Chorote word like *t-ot* 'his/her chest' the third possessive person has no phonetic realization and that there is no syllable reduction of the prefix *t(a)-* (as we analyzed for Wichi: *ø-ta-kolo* [ta.qo.lo] 'his/her leg' in (22)). These two facts made recognition and segmentation of *t(a)-* as a third-person possessor in Chorote straightforward.

Similar syllable-reduction processes have been observed in Nivaçle as well. According to Gutiérrez (2015: 72–3), segment sequences not allowed in morphological concatenation or fast speech are contexts that contribute to deletion of the syllabic vowel. Syllable reduction occurs in nominal and verbal prefixes:

(29) Nivaçle

xa-klesh [xa.klɛf] ~ x-klesh [x.klɛf] ‘I bathe’

(Gutiérrez 2015: 72–3)

Thus, the prefix **tV-* could have undergone this type of phonological process in Nivaçle as well. Additionally, assuming that this prefix was present in Proto-Mataguyan, something similar could have occurred in Maka and Chorote, given the traces of **t(V)-* found in the inflected possessive forms. If this same phenomenon is found in at least two languages in the family, in non-cognate words (contrast *yi-t-uuk* ‘my arm’ (Ni) with *n'-t-kwey/o-t-kwey* (Wi); *yi-t-aco* ‘my face’ (Ni) with *n'-t-ey/o-t-tey* (Wi)), the status of *t(V)-* as a separate morpheme may be generalized as a hypothesis for the whole language family.

12.4.1 Meaning/function of *t(V)-*

We have so far argued that historically **t(V)-* was neither part of the possessive prefix paradigm nor of the root. We have shown that it is present in the paradigms of various nominal forms designating body parts and that there are traces of this morpheme in the four languages, possibly dating back to Proto-Mataguyan. With respect to its meaning and morphological position in the word, we have noted that: a) it is related to the meaning of the root (body parts); b) it occurs between the possessive prefix and the root; c) it is in the same slot as nominal possessive classifiers; and d) in both Nivaçle and Wichí, this morpheme combines with roots designating body parts (and apparently this is also the case in Chorote and Maka, according to the few available examples in the linguistic sources).⁷ This is illustrated in (30) and (31).

Nivaçle

(30) a. *ji-t-oich'a*

1POSS-CLF.BP-thigh

‘my thigh’

b. *ji-ka-nalhu*

1POSS-POSS.CLF1-day

‘my daily pay’

⁷ In the data supplied by Fabre (2016: 82) there is only one example of *t-* attached to a noun not referring to body parts (*t'i-xaixafa* ‘his/her mate/companion’), although the prefix is *t'i-* instead of *ta-* or *t'a-*.

Wichi

(31)

a. n²-t-kolo

1POSS-CLF.BP-leg

'my leg'

b. n²-ka-hele

1POSS-POSS.CLF1-yica

'my yica (type of bag made of vegetal fibers)'

Statements (a)–(d) given in the last paragraph are the reasons that lead us to propose that **t(V)-* could have been a type of classifier within the group of inalienable nouns.

Furthermore, in Nivaçle, an interesting phenomenon would reinforce this proposal. The inflection paradigm for the term *-nu* 'bone' contains *t-* only in the indefinite possessive person, as occurs in other cases: *yi-nu* 'my bone', *a-nu* 'your bone', *lha-nu* 'his/her bone', *cas-nu* 'our (inclusive) bone', *va-t-nu* 'somebody's bone'. In any of these forms the sense is always the same, a reference to the bone as a part of the possessor's body. However, as noted by Vidal and Payne (2021), to refer to the bone as an entity foreign or external to the body of the possessor, for instance, the bone of an animal being eaten by a person, the construction has *ka-* 'general possessive classifier' between the pronominal prefix and the root, as shown in examples (32) and (33).⁸

Nivaçle

(32) *ji-ka-nu*'

1POSS-POSS.CLF1-bone

'my bone' (e.g. from a food animal that I caught as prey, from an animal)

(33) *vat-ka-nu*'

POSS.INDF-POSS.CLF1-bone

'somebody's bone (of some animal)'

What these examples reveal is that the function of *t(V)-* with body parts indicates that the part referred to by the noun belongs to the body of the possessor participant indexed by the prefix. In contrast, the construction with *ka-* indicates an indirect relationship with the grammatically coded possessor; that is, the body part denoted by the noun is not a part of the body of the possessor indexed by the prefix, but of the body of someone else.

⁸ Fabre states that 'mediative' *ka/k'a-* in Nivaçle is used with nouns and verbs. The mediative marker between the possessor and the possessee indicates indirect possession (Fabre 2016). With verbs, it indicates that the participant marked on the verb is affected by and experiences a situation (Vidal and Payne 2021).

It can be argued that in the indefinite possessed noun *va-t-nu* 'somebody's bone (part of his/her body)' in (33), /t-/ is part of a prefix that is synchronically fused and has been reanalyzed as a single morpheme. Moreover, the classificatory function of *t(V)*- must be lost, since it cannot be distinguished from the inflectional function of the possessive prefix.

This type of classification distinguishing classes of inalienable entities is found in Arawak languages as well. As noted by Aikhenvald (2018b), an indefinite possessive suffix is added to the indefinite person prefix for some inalienable nouns referring to body parts, thus establishing a sub-classification with respect to kinship terms, because there are no traces of it in any kinship terms. Since this is not observed in all Arawak languages, the author concludes that it must be an old retention. In the proto-language, this suffix also occurs in verbal nominalizations, as an indicator of indefinite arguments or of a change in word class.

In the Mataguayan language group, this classificatory function is taken up by *t(V)*- and must be old, since only traces of its existence are now apparent. As suggested, in the four languages reconstructed **t(V)*- is fused, to a greater or lesser extent, with the possessive prefix. This can be seen more clearly in the indefinite person in Maka and Nivaçle, respectively *wit*- and *vat*-. In the third person, instead, it is practically lost in Chorote, with *t*- currently functioning as an alternative form of *ji*- ~ *jl*- in exceptional cases, but denoting body parts. Similarly, in Nivaçle, *t'(a)*- also functions as an alternative form of the third person occurring less frequently than *lh(a)*-, according to Fabre (2016), but the terms it occurs with are all body parts as well. In Nivaçle and Chorote there are also body-part terms that occur with the third-person possessive prefixes that do not carry *t*-. In Wichi, unlike the other three languages, *t(V)*- is preserved more clearly in the paradigm. Some sources documented *t(V)*- in the first-person singular form *nt*- and in the third-person form *ta*- (upstream Bermejo; spoken in the area of Rivadavia county, province of Salta; Terraza 2009). Other sources pointed out the presence of *ot*- for first-person singular, *ta*- for third person and *lhat*- for first-person plural (upstream Bermejo; in the area of Embarcación, a city located in the province of Salta; Lunt 1999). According to our data (Nercesian 2013), the possessive forms for first person is *ot*-, for second person *at*-, and for third person, *ta*-, (downstream Pilcomayo in the area of Ramón Lista county, in the province of Formosa), and *n't*-, *at*-, *ta*- in the downstream Bermejo region, in Formosa province. In these sources, as in the rest of the Mataguayan languages, the terms appearing in combination with *t(V)*- are all names of body parts, though there are body-part terms that no longer have *t(V)*- in their roots. The geographic extension of *t(V)*- down to the southernmost region of the Mataguayan group suggests that the spreading of this morpheme might date back to ancient times.

Another fact relevant for understanding the history and function of this morpheme is that in the languages of this family there is a formally similar morpheme,

added just before the verbal root of intransitive verbs, establishing a distinction between non-agentive and agentive intransitives. This occurs in Nivaçle and Wichi, according to our data. In Nivaçle, *t-* is found in the second and third persons, while in Wichi it can be found in the entire paradigm. Examples of some of these verbs with *t(V)-* in these two languages can be seen in (34) and (35).

Nivaçle

- (34) a. lh-t-'at'o 'you yawn'
 b. lh-t-cajaclit 'you burp'
 c. lh-t-afshiy 'you shout'
 d. lh-t-ajuclay 'you whistle'

Wichi

- (35) a. n'-t-'on 'I shout'
 b. n'-t-'ek 'I eat'
 c. n'-t-katay 'I cook'
 d. n'-t-chema 'I grasp'

Both in Wichi and in Nivaçle this prefix is sensitive to a valence-changing derivation. The prefix *t(a)-*, used essentially with agentive monovalent verbs, alternates with *yi-* ~ *i-* ~ *hi-*, which occurs with bivalent verbs. Causative morphological derivation in (36) and (37) triggers a valence change and a change of verbal class, and therefore, a change of the verbal-class prefix; compare (a) and (b):

Wichi

- (36) a. n'-t-'elh
 ISBJ-CLF.VBL.INTR-urinate
 'I am urinating.'
 b. n'-y-'elh-yen n'-lhos
 ISBJ-CLF.VBL.TR-urinate-CAUS 1POSS-child/son
 'I am making my child/son urinate.'
- (37) a. n'-t-katin
 ISBJ-CLF.VBL.INTR-jump
 'I jump.'
 b. i-katih-yen-n'u
 [3SBJ]CLF.VBL.TR-jump-CAUS-1OBJ
 'He/It makes me jump.'

In Nivaçle, causativization also brings about changes in the verbal roots. Synchronically, Fabre (2016) considers *t-* as a third-person subject marker. However, in causative derivation, the third-person prefix changes to *ya-* 'third-person subject marker' in the transitive verb form; compare (38a) and (39a) with (38b) and (39b). A similar phenomenon to that noted in Wichi happens in Nivaçle, with

the difference that in Nivaçle *t-* and *ya-* have been reanalyzed in the language as third-person subject prefixes belonging to two different paradigms.

Nivaçle

- (38) a. *t-afshiy*
 3SBJ-shout
 ‘He shouts.’
- b. *y-afshiy-yan*
 3SBJ-shout-CAUS
 ‘He makes someone shout.’
- (39) a. *ta-ch’iy*
 3SBJ-spit
 ‘He spits.’
- b. *ya-ch’iy-an*
 3SBJ-spit-CAUS
 ‘He makes somebody spit.’

Since this morpheme is apparently not present in the entire verbal inflectional paradigm, in several descriptive studies *t(a)-* ~ *t'(a)-* have been considered third-person subject pronominal prefixes, with the exception of Stell (1987: 339), who pointed out that *t(a)-* ~ *t'(a)-* are intransitive markers in Nivaçle. Fabre (2016: 189), however, considered *ta-* a ‘cislocative’ prefix in Nivaçle, but he also analyzes *t(a)-* ~ *t'(a)-* as pronominal verbal prefixes for second and third singular persons in conjugation II, and third singular person in conjugation IV (2016: 133–45).

From a historically and comparative perspective, in Wichi and Nivaçle the morpheme *t(V)-* seems to have a similar function, differentiating intransitive verbal classes. Nowadays in Wichi, *t(V)-* and *(y)i-* ~ *(h)i-* are partially co-lexicalized and are most usually fused with the root, up to the point of obscuring their segmentability. The phonological process of syllable reduction and vowel loss described previously for the **t(V)-* morpheme in inalienable body-part terms likewise applies to the *t(V)-* morphemes in agentive intransitive verbs.

Partial or total isomorphism between the **t(V)-* morpheme with nominal roots and with verbal roots might be interpreted either as a mere coincidence (which is likely, since /*ta*/ is an unmarked syllable from the phonological point of view, which is very frequently found), or as the correlate of a common source: originally the same morpheme could have been combined with nominal and verbal roots. This second hypothesis cannot be ruled out since, synchronically, Mataguanan languages can take verbal morphology with nominal roots without changing the word-class (e.g. temporal and aspectual suffixes), and nominal morphology

with verbal roots, likewise without changing the word-class (e.g. augmentative/diminutive). This could, therefore, suggest the existence of a single form that can be reconstructed for nouns and verbs, in which case the same morpheme linked to the presence of body parts within the group of inalienable nouns would have developed functions compatible with the agency of the single argument in a group of intransitive verbs.

As relational nouns, body parts semantically suggest the presence of an argument of which they are a part. Thus, where affectedness occurs, there is an extension of the part of the body to the affected argument it belongs to; that is, from the part to the possessor as a whole. This sympathetic relationship also occurs in actions, where the argument the part belongs to controls and executes the part's action (cf. Lehmann, this volume chapter 2). The differentiation of body parts from the rest of all other inalienable nouns is therefore linked to the sympathetic relationship existing between the part and the whole, apparently not present in any other inalienable nouns, making this group of terms special as regards semantics and grammar. This particular association between the part and the whole is based on affectedness or control, and can be extended to the relationship between the argument and the event denoted in intransitive or monovalent verbs. As mentioned previously, a *t(V)*-morpheme differentiates agentive intransitive verbs (many of which refer to activities or events involving body parts) within the class of intransitive verbs. This changes when a second argument is involved. In other words, when there is no direct link between the event and the argument but there is one between the activity performed by a participant upon and the other it is performed upon. As proposed by Lehmann (in this volume chapter 2), "entities high on the empathy hierarchy are prototypical controllers", and ownership is a form of control. The semantic structure of body-part terms is also connected to agency, since the relationship is between the possessor (whole) who controls and the possessed (part) affected or controlled by the former.

In this part-whole relationship, the whole may be presumed to be the actor, whereas the part is interpreted as an undergoer. Indeed, the whole and the part may be both actors and undergoers to the extent that the parts are extensions of their possessors. In other words, semantically there is a close relationship between the actor and undergoer or between the controller and controlled categories, which are present both in verbal predicate argumentation structures and in body-part terms with a single internal argument. It is therefore not plausible that the same prefix that differentiates body-part terms from the rest of the inalienable nouns should combine with intransitive verbs, differentiating agentive from non-agentive, in an extension of the agency and control categories previously mentioned above.

12.5 Conclusions

We have shown that in the Mataguayan languages *t(V)*- can be identified in the vocabulary of body parts and that, depending on the language, this form exhibits traits of desemanticization, phonological reduction, and, in some cases, it has completely disappeared from possessive inflected forms of body-part terms. For this reason, in most grammatical descriptions and analyses of the Mataguayan languages, it has not been recognized as a separate morpheme and, therefore, interpreted as part of the possessive prefix or the nominal root (even when these analyses did not provide a consistent interpretation of the inflectional paradigms). As we have seen in this chapter, *t(V)*- is much better preserved and more productive in Wichi than in the rest of the Mataguayan languages.

We have argued that, from a historical standpoint, *t(V)*- was a morpheme separated from the possessive prefix and the body-part root. In our perspective, this prefix could be reconstructed to Proto-Mataguayan as a possessive classifier for body-part terms within the class of inalienable nouns, distinguishing this group from kinship terms. The prefix *t(V)*- occupies the same morphological slot that the possessive classifiers *k(V)*- for general things and *lo*- for domestic animals occupy.

We have also argued that with intransitive verbs there is a pattern that is suspiciously similar to that found in body-part terms in several Mataguayan languages. Upon exploring the valence changes in different verb classes, we have concluded that *t*- has—at least in two languages in the family, i.e. Wichi and Nivaçle—a productive function differentiating semantically agentive intransitive subjects from semantically non-agentive intransitive subjects. We hypothesize that this could have a common source with the manner in which it appears in the possessive construction, though synchronically this could have gone unnoticed in some prior analyses, both of body parts and of agentive intransitive verbs. Given the flexibility in the category selection of nominal and verbal roots to become predicates in Mataguayan languages, it may be expected that both classes of words should share some grammatical categories.

Finally, this paper chapter considered the whole group of Mataguayan languages, focusing on one particular phenomenon, with the intention of making a contribution to the long overdue task of historical reconstruction of the Mataguayan language family.

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