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The Grammar
of Inalienability

A Typological Perspective on Body Part Terms
and the Part–Whole Relation

Offprint

Mouton
de Gruyter
Multiple reflections of inalienability in Mohawk*

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1. Introduction

Discussions of the concept of inalienability arise most often in two contexts: descriptions of nominal possessive constructions, and discussions of grammatical patterns sometimes termed "possessor raising" or "promotion". Although the semantic distinctions reflected by these constructions may be closely related, they are not necessarily equivalent.

Both kinds of constructions appear in Mohawk, an Iroquoian language of northeastern North America. Mohawk is a polysynthetic language with elaborate prefixation, suffixation, and noun incorporation. All verbs contain pronominal prefixes referring to their core arguments. In addition to person, gender, and number, the prefixes distinguish participants according to their roles as agents or patients. Compare the first person pronominal prefixes in the verbs in (1)-(3):

(1) katewey:shsštba?
k-ate-wey:shst-ha?
1:SG:AGT-know:how-CAUSATIVE-HABITUAL
'I am studying, learning.'

(2) wakatshen:ni
wak-at-shen:ni
1:SG:PAT-SEMI:REFLEXIVE-happy:STATIVE
'I am happy.'

(3) tekheyatun:nekta:nis
te-khey-atun:nektani-s
DUALIC-1:SG:AGT/F:SG:PAT-frighten-IIHABITUAL
'I scare her.'

The Mohawk case system is based on the semantic roles of participants in events and states, but it is fully grammaticised. In any particular context, only one case or case combination is grammatical.

Nouns contain a formally similar set of pronominal prefixes. Some nouns appear with agent prefixes and some with patient prefixes, but the
motivation behind the case distribution is different from that in verbs and less transparent.

(4) raksâ:ʔa
   ra-ksaʔ-a
   M:SG:AGT-child-DIMINUTIVE
   'boy'

(5) eksâ:ʔa
    e-ksaʔ-a
    F:SG:AGT-child-DIMINUTIVE
    'girl'

(6) kâkhwaʔ
    ka-khw-aʔ
    N:SG:AGT-food-NS
    'food, meal'

(7) roksâ:ʔa
    ro-kstâ-ʔa
    M:SG:PAT-old-DIMINUTIVE
    'old man'

(8) akokstâ:ʔa
    ako-kstâ-ʔa
    F:SG:PAT-old-DIMINUTIVE
    'old woman'

(9) oñnyûkseri
    o-ñnyûkseri
    N:SG:PAT-onion
    'onion'

2. Nominal possession

Possessive constructions appear less often in Mohawk than in many languages because of the existence of alternative structures that accomplish some of the same functions. Kinship, for example, is generally expressed by means of stative verbs that relate participants. In most kin terms, both kin are represented within the pronominal prefix, whether they are first,
second, or third person masculine or feminine. Where there is a culturally significant age difference between the two kin in question, a transitive prefix is used, the older kin encoded as agent, the younger as patient.

(10) rakhsótha
rak-bso-t-∅a
M:SG:AGT/1:SG:PAT-grandparent-DIMINUTIVE
‘my grandfather’

(11) rakedihba
rake-∅ni-∅a
M:SG:AGT/1:SG:PAT-father-DIMINUTIVE
‘my father’

(12) rakhsis-∅a
rak-bsi-∅a
‘my older brother’

(13) riʔka-∅a
ri-∅ka-∅a
‘my younger brother’

(14) riy-∅a
ri-∅a-∅a
1:SG:AGT/M:SG:PAT-son-DIMINUTIVE
‘my son’

(15) riyater-∅a
ri-∅atere-∅a
1:SG:AGT/M:SG:PAT-grandchild-DIMINUTIVE
‘my grandson’

When the two kin are of culturally equivalent ages, the relationship is reciprocal, and the kin are jointly represented by a dual or plural pronominal prefix followed by a reflexive/reciprocal marker.
(16) akwatatekárokuy-?a
akw-ata-téká?okuy-?a
1:EXCL:PL:AG7-RECIPIROCAL-sibling-PLURAL-
DIMINUTIVE
‘my brothers and sisters’ (Literally: ‘We are siblings to each
other.’)

(17) utyara'isè-?a
ýky-aráísè-?a
1:EXCL:DU:PAT-SEMI:REFLEXIVE-cousin-DIMINUTIVE
‘my cousin’ (Literally: ‘We two are cousins to each other.’)

(18) utyatyóba
ýky-at-ýo-?a
1:EXCL:DU:PAT-SEMI:REFLEXIVE-brother:in:law-
DIMINUTIVE
‘my brother-in-law’ (Literally: ‘We two are brothers-in-law to
each other,’ (male ego))

A second reason for the comparative rarity of nominal possessive con-
structions in Mohawk is the fact that many entities are identified by
means of morphological verbs rather than nouns.

(19) tsi thonuhwétsba?
tsi t-bon-uhwéts-?a?
 at CISLOCATIVE-M:PL:AG7'-spend:the:night-HABITUAL
‘their bedroom’ (Literally: ‘where they spend the night’)

Part/whole relationships are also often represented by morphological
verbs rather than by pairs of nouns.

(20) tsi yotekhwahraítshe-ra-te?
tsi yo-te-khwa-hraóitshe-?a-te?
at N:SG:PAT-SEMI:REFLEXIVE-food-set-NOM-be:edged:
STATIVE
‘(the) table’s edge’ (Literally: ‘where (the) table edges’)

(21) watenbobaniyutákkhwa?
w-ate-nbob-niyut-ákhw-?a?
N:SG:AGT-door-hang-INTRUMENTAL-HABITUAL
‘door hinge’ (Literally: ‘One door-hangs with it.’)
Possessive constructions consisting of pairs of nominals do of course exist. As in many polysynthetic languages, the possessor is specified by a pronominal prefix on the possessed noun, a pattern sometimes referred to as head-marking (Nichols 1988). The nominal identifying the possessor is unmarked for the relationship.

(22)  
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ohkwá:ri} & \quad \text{ranéhy} \\
o\text{-} \text{kwarì} & \quad \text{ra-nehúy} \\
3:\text{N:SG:PAT-bear} & \quad 3:\text{M:SG:AGT-hide}
\end{align*}
\]
‘bear’s skin’, ‘bear skin’ (Literally: ‘bear his-skin’)

(23)  
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{tsyo\text{-}kwarìs} & \quad \text{raotikhwà}\text{a}\text{?} \\
\text{tsyo\text{-}kwarìs} & \quad \text{raoti-khwà\text{-}a}\text{?} \\
\text{blackbird} & \quad \text{M:PI.:PAT-food-NS}
\end{align*}
\]
‘blackbirds’ food’ (Literally: ‘blackbird their-food’)

The prefix indicating the possessor appears sometimes in the agent case as in (22), sometimes in the patient case as in (23). The choice of case for the possessor reflects a distinction much like inalienability.

2.1. Agent possessors

Agent pronouns occur with most nouns referring to body parts, including: -ya’t- ‘body’, -nyùtsi ‘head’, -nyùs\text{wàr}- ‘hairline’, -kà\text{‘}kwàr\text{'-}kà\text{‘}ts\text{tar}- ‘forehead’, -abràbùhs- ‘temple’, -kùhs- ‘face’, -kàhr- ‘eye’, -\text{n}yuhs- ‘nose’, -tsùt\text{‘}ts/-\text{r}i\text{‘}ts- ‘lip’, -hsüb\text{kar}- ‘upper lip (area below nose)’, -\text{n}\text{d}à\text{n}à\text{s}\text{b}s- ‘tongue’, -\text{n}aw\text{r}r/-\text{n}o\text{’}ts- ‘tooth’, -\text{y}à\text{b}t- ‘gum’, -nho\text{’}kw\text{w}/\text{n}hòsk\text{w}- ‘cheek’, -nyà\text{‘}kwà- ‘jaw’, -\text{ry}b\text{o}ts\text{h}- ‘chin’, -\text{a}hu\text{’}t- ‘ear’, -\text{h}ny\text{a}bt- ‘neck (whole)’, -\text{n}yà\text{’}r/-\text{n}yà\text{’}k\text{a}\text{r}\text{è}k\text{ù}\text{h} ‘nap\text{e’}', -\text{n}\text{y}à\text{’}t\text{/}-\text{n}ya\text{’}t\text{’} ‘throat, inside’, -\text{ny}a\text{‘}kwà- ‘throat, outside’, ‘Adam’s apple’, -nyà\text{’}k\text{a}r- ‘throat, middle’, -\text{n}hà\text{’}bs- ‘shoulder’, -\text{n}e\text{’}r\text{a}hr- ‘shoulder blade’, -\text{n}à\text{’}sh\text{ì}- ‘arm’, -\text{h}nù\text{’}b- ‘armpit’, -\text{h}y\text{’}o\text{’}bs- ‘elbow’, -\text{n}à\text{’}sh\text{à}w\text{è}t\text{’}- ‘wrist’, -\text{a}h\text{’}t\text{s}y(\text{\text{a}’n-})- ‘hand’, -\text{h}s\text{y}- ‘palm’, -\text{tsi}\text{‘}kw\text{w}- ‘fist’, -\text{n}à\text{’}b\text{t}- ‘knuckle’, -\text{h}nù\text{’}h\text{s}- ‘finger’, -\text{t}si\text{‘}w\text{è}y\text{’}h\text{k}r/-\text{h}y\text{’}b\text{h}k\text{a}r- ‘thumb’, -\text{a}sk\text{wà}\text{’}n- ‘chest’, -\text{k}ù\text{b\text{‘}k}w\text{a}r- ‘nipple’, -\text{n}à\text{’}b\text{h}- ‘ribs’, -\text{h}s\text{i}à\text{’}b\text{t/-}\text{h}s\text{i}à\text{’}b\text{t}- ‘midriff’, -\text{h}y\text{a}k\text{à}r- ‘waist’, -\text{r}y\text{’}h\text{à}b\text{’}s- ‘torso’, -\text{n}e\text{k}\text{wà}l\text{à}t- ‘belly’, -\text{n}e\text{’}r\text{ì}t\text{st}- ‘navel’, -\text{h}k\text{à}ts- ‘body from waist down’, -\text{h}s\text{y}- ‘back’, -\text{r}h\text{è}k\text{wà\’}n- ‘lower back’, -\text{h}o\text{’}k\text{w}/-\text{b}n\text{à\’}ts- ‘buttocks’, -\text{n}e\text{k}\text{wà}w\text{à}r\text{’} ‘hip’, -\text{h}s\text{ì}- ‘leg’, -\text{h}n\text{ì}\text{’}s\text{h}- ‘thigh’, -\text{k\text{’}w}t\text{’}t\text{h}- ‘knee’, -\text{r}è\text{b}t\text{è}ts- ‘back of knee’, -\text{n}y\text{à\’}t- ‘shin’, -\text{s}è\text{’}m\text{ù}- ‘calf’, -\text{h}s\text{ì\’}n\text{è}k\text{ò}t/\text{-}\text{n}s\text{ì\’}k\text{wà}l\text{à}t- ‘ankle’, -\text{t}si\text{‘}r\text{à}h\text{o\’}k\text{w}- ‘ankle, back’, -\text{h}s\text{ì\’}t- ‘foot’, -\text{a}’\text{k}\text{ò}t\text{àr-}
'heel', -rat- ‘heel (fleshy part)', -yai'kwa'tahkwʌ 'arch', -askweʔy- ‘ball of foot', -rakwahlt-/muny- ‘sole', and -hyakwir- ‘toe'. Interestingly, all of these nouns consistently appear with a locative suffix when possessed, even in those contexts where no locative would be used in English.

(24)  kkahraːke
      k-kahraʔ-ke
      1:SG:AGT-eye-NS-LOCATIVE
      '(on) my eye'

(25)  keneriʔstaːke
      ke-neriʔst-aʔ-ke
      1:SG:AGT-navel-NS-LOCATIVE
      '(on) my navel'

(26)  kaʔkotaraːke
      k-aʔkotaraʔ-ke
      1:SG:AGT-heel-NS-LOCATIVE
      '(on) my heel'

Nouns referring to animal body parts such as -muʔkwarist- ‘snout', -tsinareʔ- ‘hoof', -itabs- ‘tail' and -aʔkobs- ‘tail feathers' similarly appear with agent pronouns and locatives.

2.2. Patient possessors

Patient prefixes appear with all other kinds of possessions. (The form of the prefix changes with the phonological context.)

(27)  akhmá:taʔ
      ak-hmaʔt-aʔ
      1:SG:PAT-bag-NS
      'my purse'

(28)  akे:sere
      akè-ʔsere
      1:SG:PAT-car
      'my car'
(29) akwathàn̩sterä
akw-athàn̩sterä
1:SG:PAT-pants
‘my pants’

Locative suffixes can appear with such nouns if a location is specifically designated, but they are not used otherwise.

(30) akhnàítà:ke
ak-ñat-aʔ-ke
1:SG:PAT-bag-NS-LOCATIVE
‘on my purse’

2.3. The distinction

A difference between the use of agent and patient prefixes can be seen in several pairs of terms based on the same root.

(31) khnà:sà:ke
k-ñà:s-ʔ-ke
1:SG:AGT-throat-NS-LOCATIVE
‘my throat’

(32) akhnà:sà?
ak-ñà:s-ʔ?
1:SG:PAT-throat-NS
‘my collar’

(33) keñyukserà:ke
keñyukser-ʔ-ke
1:SG:AGT-onion-NS-LOCATIVE
‘my big toe’ (onionlike in appearance, according to speakers)

(34) akeñyukseri
akeñyukseri
1:SG:PAT-onion
‘my onion’

As is typical of languages with an alienable/inalienable distinction, disconnected body parts are generally classified as alienable. With the noun for ‘fingernail’, for example, either an agent or a patient possessor
can be used, but the agent form is generally used when the fingernail is still attached, while the patient form is more often used after it has been cut off.

(35) ktsiʔerä:ke  
k-tsiʔer-aʔ-ke  
1:SG:AGT-nail-NS-LOCATIVE  
'(on) my nail(s)'

(36) aktsiʔerä:ke  
ak-tsiʔer-aʔ-ke  
1:SG:PAT-nail-NS-LOCATIVE  
'(on) my nail(s)' (especially after cutting)

In a legend about a headless horseman, the noun referring to the horseman’s head contained a patient possessor after decapitation.

Not all attached body parts appear with agent prefixes, however. The noun for 'hair', for example, appears with patient possessors.

(37) akenuʔhkwis  
ake-nuhkwis  
1:SG:PAT-hair  
'my hair'

There is some variation with nouns for 'eyebrows' and 'eyelashes', perhaps because these, like nails, are encountered both attached and unattached.

(38) kenaʔwasä:ke  
ke-naʔwas-aʔ-ke  
1:SG:AGT-eyebrow-NS-LOC  
'(on) my eyebrow(s)'

or  
akenaʔwa:sa?  
ake-naʔwa:aʔ?  
1:SG:PAT-eyebrow-NS  
'my eyebrow(s)'

(39) kkahbrehtä:ke  
k-kahbreht-aʔ-ke  
1:SG:AGT-eyelash-NS-LOC  
'(on) my eyelash(es)'

or  
akkahbrehtä:ke  
ak-kahbreht-aʔ-ke  
1:SG:PAT-eyelash-NS-LOC  
'my eyelashes'

Yet attachment is not the only factor determining the case of the possessor. A number of nouns referring to major internal organs usually appear with patient possessors.
Multiple reflections of inalienability in Mohawk

(40) awé:ri
aw-eri
1:SG:PAT-heart
‘my heart’

(41) akwathwâhsa?
akw-athwâhs-a?
1:SG:PAT-liver-NS
‘my liver’

(42) akwatstyebhseri
akw-aststyebhseri
1:SG:PAT-kidney
‘my kidney(s)’

(43) aktsinâ:kwa?
ak-tsina?kwa-a?
1:SG:PAT-lung-NS
‘my lung(s)’

(44) akcnekwâhsa?
ake-nekwâhs-a?
1:SG:PAT-blood-NS
‘my blood’

(45) ákbstya
ak-bstya
1:SG:PAT-bone
‘my bone(s)’

A noun for ‘skin’ also appears with patient possessors.

(46) akibnà:ke
ak-ibn-à:ke-ke
1:SG:PAT-skin-NS-LOCATIVE
‘on my skin’

The distribution of agent and patient possessors is clearly not random. If a new term for a body part were discovered, the appropriate forms of possessive pronouns would be easy to predict with relatively little chance of error. Yet a single feature distinguishing the two categories is not immediately obvious. Body parts that appear with agent prefixes
are permanently attached and have visible surfaces. Speakers are seldom conscious initially of the formal distinction between the two kinds of possession, but when it is brought to their attention, they sometimes suggest that the crucial factor may be one of control. They note that one does not control one’s hair or internal organs in the same way one can control arms and legs (see also Ameka (1995) on this property for Ewe body part terms). They then point out, however, that many body parts requiring agent possessors are not fully controlled, either. One moves one’s navel or one’s temple only when moving part or all of the rest of the body.

In fact, the factor underlying the choice of agent pronouns for some possessors seems to be based on a conceptual identity between animate beings and their parts. When speakers refer to their arms, they refer to themselves at the arm, a fact reflected by the appearance of locatives with body part nouns. Arms may be seen as integral, palpable, permanent extensions of a being in a way that hair is not. Internal organs are not only rarely under conscious voluntary control, they are also seldom encountered as parts of living bodies, a fact that may explain their exclusion from this category. (See also Crowley (1995) for a similar phenomenon in Paamese.)

3. “Possessor promotion” by noun incorporation

For a number of languages, an inalienability distinction has been identified in a second kind of construction, often termed “possessor raising” or “promotion”. In such constructions, the possessor of an entity seems to assume the grammatical role of that entity. Instead of ‘That dog bit my leg’, for example, in which the direct object is the leg, English speakers can say ‘That dog bit me in the leg’, where the direct object is the possessor of the leg. Such constructions are appropriate only with certain kinds of possessions. English speakers do not say, for example, ‘He bit me in the dog’ for ‘He bit my dog’.

3.1. The Mohawk construction

Mohawk contains a construction, termed noun incorporation, in which a noun stem is compounded with a verb root to yield a larger derived verb
stem, like \( -k\text{b}w+\text{uni} \) ‘meal+make’ \( > \) \( -k\text{b}\text{uni} \) ‘cook’. Often events that seem to affect possessions, especially body parts, are expressed by verbs with incorporated nouns. The incorporated noun refers to the possession, but the grammatical patient of the whole verb is the possessor. In the Mohawk examples in (47)-(49) the patient of each intransitive verb is the owner of the body part, not the body part itself.

(47) \textit{tewakahsyotanos}  
\textit{te-wak-absyot-anos}  
\text{DUALIC-1:SG:PAT-hand-cold:STATIVE}  
‘My hands are cold.’ (Literally: ‘I am coldhanded.’)

(48) \textit{wakhsunyhtanytwaks}  
\textit{wak-hsunyht-nykwak-s}  
\text{1:SG:PAT-back-ache-HABITUAL}  
‘My back aches.’ (Literally: ‘I backache.’)

(49) \textit{teyako\text{-}my\text{-}kweks}  
\textit{te-yako-\text{-}my-kwek-s}  
\text{DUALIC-3.F:SG:PAT-nose-blocked-HABITUAL}  
‘Her nose is stuffed up’ (Literally: ‘She is noseblocked.’)

In the transitive verbs in (50)-(52), the grammatical patient is the possessor of the body part, rather than the body part itself, even though the body part is the object most immediately affected.

(50) \textit{wa\text{-}kheka\text{-}star\text{-}ayake/}  
\textit{wa\text{-}khe-\text{-}k\text{\textasciitilde}star-aya\text{-}ke/}  
\text{PAST-1:SG:AGT/3.F:SG:PAT-forehead-hit-PUNCTUAL}  
‘I slapped her face’ (Literally: ‘I faceslapped her.’)

(51) \textit{t\text{\textasciitilde}khswake\text{-}ket}  
\textit{tak-bsw-ket}  
\text{2:SG:AGT/1:SG:PAT-back-scratch}  
‘Scratch my back!’ (Literally: ‘Backscratch me.’)

(52) \textit{wahiky\text{-}ohare\text{-}?}  
\textit{wa-hi-\text{-}k\text{\textasciitilde}hs-ohare\text{-}?}  
‘I washed his face.’ (Literally: ‘I facewashed him.’)

Noun incorporation of this type appears at first to reflect the same distinction of inalienability as nominal possession. In many languages, the
set of nouns incorporated in this way consists chiefly of those referring to body parts. Mohawk nouns for the hand, various parts of the back, the nose, the forehead, and the face all require agent possessive prefixes when they appear alone.

Noun roots requiring agent possessors in nominal constructions are not the only ones that can be incorporated into verbs in Mohawk, however. A wide variety of noun roots requiring patient possessors can be incorporated into the same verbs that appear in the above examples.

(53)  
\[
\text{waʔkeʔserehtőhare?}  \\
\text{waʔ-keʔ-sereht-ohareʔ?}  \\
\text{PAST-1:SG:AGT-car-wash-PUNCTUAL}  \\
\text{‘I washed the car.’ (Literally: ‘I carwashed.’)}
\]

(54)  
\[
\text{waʔkenuhsőhareʔ}  \\
\text{waʔ-keʔ-nuhs-ohareʔ?}  \\
\text{PAST-1:SG:AGT-house-wash-PUNCTUAL}  \\
\text{‘I cleaned the house.’ (Literally: ‘I housecleaned.’)}
\]

Possessors of the car and the house cannot appear as core arguments of the derived verb, however.

(55)  
\[
^*\text{wahiʔserehtőhareʔ}  \\
\text{waʔ-hiʔ-sereht-ohareʔ?}  \\
\text{^*‘I carwashed him.’ (for ‘I washed his car.’)}
\]

(56)  
\[
^*\text{waʔkhenyhsőhareʔ}  \\
\text{waʔ-keʔ-nuhs-ohareʔ?}  \\
\text{PAST-1:SG:AGT/3.F:SG:PAT-house-wash-PUNCTUAL}  \\
\text{\(^*‘I\ housecleaned\ her.’\ \ (for\ ‘I\ cleaned\ her\ house.’)\ }
\]

Instead, constructions like ra:se:sere waʔkentőhareʔ ‘his-car I-washed’ or ra:se:sere waʔkeʔserehtőhareʔ ‘his-car I-car-washed’, and akenůhsoteʔ waʔkentőhareʔ ‘her-house-standing I-washed’ or akenůhsoteʔ waʔkhenyhsőhareʔ ‘her-house-standing I-house-washed’ would be used. Although a vast number of nouns are incorporated in Mohawk, it appears that only possessors of inalienably possessed entities may assume the roles of core arguments of the resulting verbs.

A closer look reveals that these two sets of nouns roots, those that require agent possessors, and those whose possessors serve as core arguments when they are incorporated, are not the same. Recall that the
noun roots for ‘hair’ and ‘skin’ do not appear with agent possessors. Yet these roots are often incorporated into verbs whose agents or patients are their possessors.

(56) \textit{teyakonw\textunderline{u}\textsubscript{h}keri}  
\textit{te-yako-n\textunderline{u}kw\textsubscript{w}-ri}  
\textsc{dualic-f:sg:pat-hair-curly-stat}  
‘\textit{She} has curly hair.’ (Literally: ‘\textit{She} is curlyhaired.’)

(57) \textit{wa\textunderline{h}khen\textunderline{u}\textsubscript{w}kwah\textunderline{h}re\textacute{e}}  
\textit{wa\textacute{-}khe-n\textunderline{u}kw\textsubscript{w}-bre\textacute{-}r}  
\textsc{past-1:sg:agt/3.f.pat-hair-cut-punctual}  
‘I cut her hair.’ (Literally: ‘I haircut her.’)

(58) \textit{tenih\textunderline{n}ara\textendash{k}\textsubscript{a}}  
\textit{te-n-ibn-rak\textsubscript{-}r}  
\textsc{i:incl-du-skin-light-stat}  
‘\textit{Our} skin is fair.’ (Literally: ‘\textit{We} are skinfair.’)

(59) \textit{wa\textunderline{t}k\textunderline{u}hno\textunderline{r}ar\textunderline{ak}e\textacute{e}}  
\textit{wa\textacute{-}t-ku-ibn-orarak\textacute{-}r}  
\textsc{past-dualic-1:sg:agt/2:sg:pat-skin-pinchnopunctual}  
‘I pinched your skin.’ > ‘I pinched you.’ (Literally: ‘I skinpinched you.’)

Internal organs are incorporated in the same way. The noun root for ‘blood’ normally requires a patient possessor, but the root appears in verbs whose grammatical patient is the owner of the blood.

(60) \textit{teyakonekw\textunderline{s}atsik\textunderline{b}e\textendash{t}are\textacute{e}}  
\textit{teyako-nek\textunderline{w}s-t\textunderline{ik}be\textendash{t-ar-e}r}  
\textsc{dualic-3:f:sg:pat-blood-sugar-in-stat}  
‘\textit{Her} blood is sweet.’ > ‘\textit{She} is diabetic.’ (Literally: ‘\textit{She} is bloodsweet.’)

Noun roots for ‘voice’ and ‘kiss’ appear incorporated into verbs whose core arguments are their owners, although these noun roots never appear with agent possessors in nominal constructions.
3.2. Alternative motivations

Mohawk thus contains two constructions that mirror distinctions one might term inalienability: nominal possession and noun incorporation. The distinction reflected in the two is not the same, however. The discrepancy stems from the fact that the two structures have different motivations. In possessive constructions, noun roots requiring agent possessors refer to body parts that are identified with their owners, while those requiring patient possessors are classified as discrete possessions. In incorporation, noun roots narrow the scope of their associated verbs. As was seen in the verbs to ‘car-wash’ and to ‘house-clean’, incorporated nouns need not name body parts. Carwashing and housecleaning are special kinds of cleaning; recurring, conceptually unitary activities worthy of conventional labels. Incorporated nouns need not represent possessions at all:

(63) wahnisera’ksa
    w-ahniser-aksä
    N:SG:AGT-day-bad:STATIVE
    ‘The weather is bad.’

Possessors appear as grammatical patients of verbs containing incorporated nouns only when the event as a whole affects that person significantly. Mohawk speakers can say ‘I facewashed him’ but not ‘I carwashed him’. They can say ‘I carstole him’ because the effect of the theft on the owner is usually of more interest than its effect on the car.
(64)  wa?hi'serehtانhsko?
wa?i-sereht-นhsko-?
'I stole his car' (Literally: 'I carstole him.')

The argument structure of the derived verb depends upon the meaning of the verb stem as a whole, not on the category of the incorporated noun.

3.3. Exploitation of the device

Incorporation of certain body parts has resulted in a partial semantic partitioning within the lexicon. A large number of verb stems contain the incorporated noun root -นิkuhr- 'mind', for example. These are predicates whose effect on animate participants is specifically mental.

(65)  rа?นิkuhr,i-yо
rа-?นิkuhr-i-yо
M:SG:AGT-mind-good:STATIVE
'He is patient.'

(66)  yаku?นิkuhr,hа:?
yаku-?นิkuhr-hа:i?
F:SG:PAT-mind-down-STATIVE
'She has forgotten, is depressed.'

(67)  wаku?นิkuhr,аksа?
wаku-?นิkuhr-аksа-?
1:SG:PAT-mind-bad-DAT
'I am grieving.'

Another set of verbs contain the incorporated noun root -ya?t- 'body'. These denote events or states with a physical effect on animate beings.

(68)  shаkuоta?нhаwе?
sha?о-t-пhаw-e?
'He is holding her.'
4. Conclusion

Distinctions identified as "inalienability" are most often reported in two kinds of constructions in languages: nominal possession and structures often termed "possessor raising". Constructions of both kinds exist in Mohawk, and both seem at first to reflect such a distinction. A closer look reveals that the distinctions they encode are subtly different.

Nominal possession, shown in Mohawk by pronominal prefixes on possessed nouns, can mark a special relationship of identity between the possessed and the possessor. Agent case prefixes are used for body parts that are considered palpable extensions of their owners. They are typically visible, attached, and under the control of their possessors. Patient case prefixes are used with other kinds of possessions, including not only separate objects, but also internal (invisible, uncontrollable) body parts, such as lungs and kidneys, and detachable body parts, such as hair and nails.

Noun stems referring to body parts may be incorporated into Mohawk verbs whose grammatical agents or patients are the owners of the body parts. These owners do not owe their status as core arguments to their identity with the incorporated body parts, however. The owners assume the role of grammatical agents or patients when they are the most salient agents or patients of the event or state as a whole.

What at first may appear to be a simple distinction of inalienability thus actually reflects two subtly different notions: identity on the one hand, and salient involvement on the other.
Notes

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The symbols used here generally represent their normal IPA values. Obstruents are automatically voiced before other voiced sounds. The symbol y represents a glide. The colon [:] represents vowel length, an acute accent [’] stress and high or rising tone, and a grave [’], stress and falling tone. The Polish hook [:] represents nasalisation. The following abbreviations appear: AGT = grammatical agent; DU = dual number; EXCL = exclusive; person; F = feminine gender; INCL = inclusive; LOC = locative; M = masculine gender; N = neuter/zero gender; NOM = nominaliser; NS = nominal suffix; PAT = grammatical patient; PL = plural number; SG = singular number; 1 = first person; 2 = second person; 3 = third person.

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