

A puzzle in Pidgin Delaware syntax

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Pidgin Delaware was a contact language lexically based upon the Algonquian language Delaware, used between Indians and Europeans in the middle Atlantic region during the 17th century.¹ Despite the scantiness of its attestations, the pidgin has received a great deal of attention from linguists in recent years.² In particular, Thomason (1980) has argued that a pidgin lexically based upon the language of the indigenous people, and especially one containing syntactic patterns which are marked from the perspective of crosslinguistic typology, could not be expected to arise in contact between Indians and Europeans. She therefore conjectures that the pidgin was used between the Delaware and the Iroquois, before the arrival of Europeans in the region. Among the syntactic features of Pidgin Delaware she discusses is the frequent use of SOV word order, especially in clauses containing the verb *hatta* ‘have’.³ Thomason suggests that this construction may be analogous to denominal verbs in Delaware and noun incorporation constructions in Iroquoian, where a nominal morpheme appears to the left of a verbal affix or root.

Thomason's conjecture that Pidgin Delaware predates contact with Europeans has been rejected on ethnohistorical grounds by Goddard (1995, 1997) and Buccini (in press). Moreover, Buccini (1999) criticizes Thomason's argument on syntactic and theoretical grounds, presenting instead an explanation of the various structures of the pidgin in terms of imperfect acquisition of Delaware by the Dutch.⁴ Buccini's explanation is summarized in section 2 below, following brief background comments in section 1. Within Buccini's model of the development of Pidgin Delaware, most of the pidgin's syntactic patterns can be easily explained, including the alternation between SOV and SVO order in the earlier attestations and the overwhelming preference for SVO order in the late sources recorded by English speakers. Clauses containing *hatta* ‘have’, however, present us with a puzzle: even in the late sources where the word order is generally SVO, clauses with *hatta* often display SOV order. Why should clauses containing the verb of possession resist the

¹ Delaware is a cover term for two separate but closely related languages, Munsee and Unami; see Goddard (1978, 1979). In this paper, forms from both Munsee and Unami will be cited for comparison with Pidgin Delaware. On the relative contributions of Munsee and Unami to the pidgin, see Goddard (1997) and Buccini (1996).

² The sources for Pidgin Delaware are Campanius (1696), De Laet (1633), De Vries (1655), Lindeström (1923) (written in 1650's), Pastorius (1700), Penn 1683, Prince (1912) (on *The Indian Interpreter* 1684), Thomas (1698). For discussion of Pidgin Delaware before Thomason (1980), see Brinton (1885) for a reference to the pidgin and Prince (1912). Goddard (1971) briefly discusses the language in the broader context of the ethnohistorical implications of early Delaware linguistic materials and there is the first to label the language a pidgin.

³ The Pidgin Delaware sources display a variety of spelling conventions. Other renderings of *hatta* ‘have’ are *hatah* (Thomas), *hatte* (Campanius, Lindeström), *hátte* (Campanius), *hattéu* (Campanius), *hattá* (Penn).

⁴ Thomason herself seems no longer to subscribe to the position of her (1980) article. In the introduction to the volume in which Goddard (1997) appears, she reports that “Goddard suggests that Pidgin Delaware originated in communication between Delawares and Dutchmen ...” with no reference to her earlier views (Thomason 1997:5). Nevertheless, Thomason's (1980) position continues to be widely cited (see, for example, Campbell (1997:20)).

general trend towards SVO order? In section 3 we consider, but ultimately reject, a modified version of Thomason's suggestion that the *hatta* construction may be related to noun incorporation or denominal verbs in Delaware. Instead, we show in section 4 that the form *hatta* is associated with two distinct argument structures, one in which it is used as a transitive verb of possession and another in which it functions as an intransitive existential verb. We argue that the continued use of *hatta* as an intransitive existential reinforced the retention of SOV order in its transitive possessive usage.

1 BACKGROUND

Goddard (1997) presents a comprehensive description of Pidgin Delaware; we will here mention only a few salient features necessary to understand the arguments which follow. Nearly all the lexical items of the pidgin are Delaware in origin; a few loanwords from Dutch are found as well. The pidgin, however, lacks the rich inflectional morphology typical of Algonquian languages. Nouns are not inflected for number, gender, obviation, or locative case nor are verbs inflected for subject, object, secondary object, or verbal mode. The opposition between verb stems based upon the gender of one of the verb's arguments is also absent, producing examples like the following:⁵

- (1) C <Képton Arúm>
 tie.up dog
 ‘Bindt hunden/tie up the dog’

The verb in (1) is derived from a Delaware Transitive Inanimate form (cf. the Southern Unami stem *kaxpt-* ‘tie up’ (Goddard 1997:70)) and is here used with an animate object, ‘dog’. Such a collocation would be impossible in Delaware proper.

In place of the pronominal inflection on verbs and possessed nouns characteristic of Delaware proper, Pidgin Delaware generally uses independent personal pronouns, derived from the emphatic pronouns used for topic and focus in Delaware proper. In the following sentence, the second person pronoun *kee* is used for subject and the first person pronoun *nee* is used for object:

- (2) T <Chingo kee peto nee chase?>
 when 2.pers bring 1.pers skin
 ‘When wilt thou bring me skins?’

Subjects and objects are frequently omitted, however:

- (3) P <Chingo metschi>
 when go
 ‘When do you journey again from this place?’

⁵ In the examples, the Pidgin Delaware forms are reproduced as given in the source, enclosed in angled brackets, except that <8> is used in place of Campanius's omega. The letter preceding the Pidgin Delaware form indicates the source: DL = De Laet, DV = De Vries, C = Campanius, L = Lindeström, I = Indian Interpreter, P = Pastorius, T = Thomas. Examples from Dutch or Swedish sources give the gloss from that source, followed by an English translation.

(4) L <kecko hatte marroma>
 what have sell
 ‘vad har du att sälja? / What do you have to sell?’

(5) I <matta ne kamuta>
 not 1.pers steal
 ‘No, I did not steal it’

There is even vagueness of number with the personal pronouns, so that the first person pronoun *nee* may be singular, as in (2) and (5) above, or it may be plural:

(6) I <ne olocko toon>
 1.pers hole go
 ‘we run into holes’

Third person arguments are expressed by the pronoun *joni*, derived from the inanimate singular form of ‘this’ in Delaware:

(7) C <mátta j8ni tahóttamen nijre>
 not 3.pers love 1.pers
 ‘the intet älska mig/they do not love me’ [cited in Goddard (1997:59)]

There is in addition a pronoun *kecko* which serves as an all purpose interrogative, indefinite, and relative pronoun. Its use as an indefinite pronoun is illustrated below:

(8) I <maleema cacko>
 give something
 ‘give me something’

The interrogative use of *kecko* was illustrated in (4) above; its use as a relative pronoun will be seen in section 2.1.

2 PIDGIN DELAWARE AS IMPERFECT ACQUISITION BY EUROPEANS

Two stages must be recognized in the development of Pidgin Delaware: first, the initial formation in which Dutch speakers attempted to learn the indigenous language of the Indians.⁶ By the end of the 1620's, it is likely that Pidgin Delaware had achieved a stabilized form both lexically and grammatically. A second stage can be identified which followed the conquest of New Netherland by the English in 1664. There is relatively ample evidence for the second stage in the recordings made by English speakers; for the initial contacts between the Dutch and the Indians, the Dutch documentation is extremely limited. Many colonial documents from New Netherland were destroyed or lost and in the material which has survived we find mostly lists of pidgin words. Only a few phrases appear to give us an idea of the pidgin's syntax. More useful as an indication of the

⁶ Much of the discussion in this section is taken from Buccini (1999).

pidgin's syntax in the early period are the Swedish sources, namely Lindeström and especially Campanius. The Swedes seized the southern portion of New Netherland along the Delaware Bay and lower Delaware River in 1638, where they maintained a small colony called New Sweden until the Dutch recaptured the area in 1655. Buccini (1999) argues that the attestations of Pidgin Delaware in the Swedish sources are probably close to the stabilized form of the pidgin used between the Dutch and Indians: for example, there is lexical evidence that the Swedes learned the pidgin from the Dutch, and a portion of the colonists in New Sweden were in fact Dutch.

2.1 Dutch attempts to acquire Delaware

Buccini (1999) argues that if we view Pidgin Delaware from the perspective of Dutch attempts to acquire the Indian language, the syntactic structures of the pidgin find ready explanation and can be sorted into four classes:⁷

- Delaware constructions successfully acquired by the Dutch;
- Dutch structures imposed on the Delaware target language;
- reduction of inflectional morphology;
- reduction through selection.

An example of a Delaware structure which the Dutch by and large acquired successfully is clause initial negation, illustrated in (5) above and in the following example:

(9) C <Matta nijr minamærso>
 not 1.pers be.sick
 ‘Jag är frisk och sund/I am healthy and sound’

(10) C <Matta chijr sijs cattunga>
 not 2.pers more sleep
 ‘Soof intet mehr nu/don't sleep more now’

Clause initial negation would have been very foreign to Dutch speakers, but given the pragmatic importance and frequency of negation, it is a feature which would have been extremely salient to language learners.

Another unfamiliar structure apparently acquired by the Dutch is the typically Algonquian order of new information preceding given in equational sentences:

(11) L <Nittappe kire>
 friend 2.pers
 ‘du äst min gode vän / you are my good friend’

⁷ Buccini (1999) and the present discussion assume the theoretical model of transfer in language contact presented in Van Coetsem (1988).

The second category is that of Dutch features imposed upon the Delaware target language. Examples here include the creation of new lexical categories, namely adjectives and prepositions, and the extension of the indefinite-interrogative pronoun *kecko* to introduce relative clauses and indirect questions. The following examples illustrate Pidgin Delaware adjectives, a preposition, and a relative pronoun:

- (12) L <Måkirick pickon>
 big gun
 ‘ett stycke eller storbössa/large guns, cannons’
- (13) C <hurit siscko hopockan>
 good clay pipe
 ‘En wacker Leerpipa/a handsome clay-pipe’
- (14) C <chéko paéwo taan j8ni>
 who come to 3.pers
 ‘som kommer til honom / who come to him’
 [cited in Goddard (1997:93, n.124)]

The corresponding strategies in Delaware are all morphological and must have been opaque to the Dutch speakers trying to acquire Delaware. Compare, for example, Southern Unami *pé* ‘he comes’, inflected in the independent indicative (Goddard 1979:viii) with *pé·ya·t* ‘the one who came’, inflected in the conjunct participle mode, used for relative clauses (Goddard 1979:80). The participle mode is also used in inflecting nominal modifiers comparable to the adjectives seen in (12) and (13) above: for example, Munsee *me·mankki·lóhti·t óhpǎnak* ‘big potatoes’ (Goddard 1979:136); the phrase could also be glossed ‘potatoes which are big’. In place of prepositions, Delaware proper would more likely add a derivational suffix to a verb stem, or compound a preverb with the verb stem, to express semantic notions such as goal or source. Compare Munsee *pétoow* ‘he brings (something)’ with *pétaweew* ‘he brings (something) for (someone)’ (O’Meara 1996:236, 235); and *ngúchiim* ‘I came out’ with *wiikwáhmung nóonj-kchiim* ‘I came out of the house’, where the verb stem *kchii-* ‘come out’ is compounded with the preverb *wunji-* ‘from’ (O’Meara 1996:80). None of these morphological strategies seem to have been successfully identified by the Dutch who were attempting to learn Delaware.

The third category is that of massive reduction of inflectional morphology, which has already been alluded to in section 1 and which is described in detail in Goddard (1997).⁸ Besides the absence of all types of noun inflection and the lack of verb inflection for subject and object, we may also mention here that specialized modes of Delaware verb inflection triggered by semantic or syntactic factors such as negation are absent in the pidgin.

⁸ It should be noted here that Goddard (1997:79) has adduced good evidence for active Delaware participation in the process of morphological reduction; in other words, this is an instance of accommodation by Delaware speakers who simplified their speech for the benefit of their European interlocutors

The fourth category – education through selection – is the one of most interest for this investigation of a word order problem in Pidgin Delaware. In Delaware and Algonquian in general, subject, object, and verb may occur in any order (Goddard 1997:50, Dahlstrom 1995). The word order of the pidgin is primarily SVO and SOV, as seen in the following examples:

- (15) C <Nijr pææt chijre j8ni rankunti>
 1.pers bring 2.pers 3.pers freely
 ‘Jag geer tig thetta för intet/I give you this for nothing’
- (16) C <J8ni tænda mochijrick uranda pætton>
 that fire big heat bring
 ‘Thenna elden gifwer myckin warma ifrån sig/
 that fire gives off a lot of heat’
- (17) C <Mochijrick sevarænda hatte>
 big sadness have
 ‘Wara myckit bekymrad/to be very troubled’
- (18) C <maranijto táckhan>
 do/make wood
 ‘hugga hwed/cut wood’
- (19) DV <Rancontyn Marinit>
 peace do/make
 ‘to make peace’

Significantly, the two word orders possible in Dutch are also SVO and SOV: objects occur to the right of the verb in simple main clauses and in non-negated imperatives, but in subordinate clauses of various types, in main clauses containing an auxiliary or modal, and in negative imperatives, the object precedes the verb. (See Buccini (1999) for examples.) In our view, the presence of SVO and SOV order in the pidgin is the result of reduction through selection, by which the Dutch speakers employed only the two word orders familiar to them from their own language.

To summarize the claims of this section, we follow Buccini (1999) in viewing the structures of Pidgin Delaware as reflecting imperfect acquisition by the Dutch of a typologically unfamiliar language. Syntactic and grammatical oppositions expressed by morphological strategies in Delaware were not successfully acquired by the Dutch: in the pidgin we find that these oppositions are simply absent altogether (e.g., noun and verb inflection), or that the Dutch speakers created new categories, such as a relative pronoun, as a calque on Dutch constructions. The only unfamiliar constructions successfully acquired by the Dutch were clause-initial negation and the equational construction where new information precedes given. These two constructions involve not word-internal morphemes but rather independent syntactic items, which could be perceived by the Dutch attempting to learn the Indians' language. With respect to word order, the Dutch

were able to select the two permutations of subject, verb, and object familiar to them from Dutch out of the six possibilities presented to them in Delaware.

2.2 *Word order in the later Pidgin Delaware materials*

After the conquest of New Netherland by the English in 1664, Pidgin Delaware continued to be widely used, especially in those areas where the European population was relatively small and the Indians were able to maintain their own social order. Of the Pidgin Delaware sources from the English colonial period, two are sufficiently voluminous to give us good information on the syntax of the language: the “Indian Interpreter” of 1684 and Thomas' wordlist and dialogue from 1698. The language of these and the minor late sources by and large is in agreement with that which we find in the earlier Dutch and Swedish sources; for example, we find clause-initial negation and the same use of adjectives as seen in the earlier sources:

(20) I <matta ne hatta>
not 1.pers have
'I have nothing'

(21) T <Kee namen neskec kabay og
2.pers see black horse and
marchkec moos etka opeg megis>
red cow with white sheep
'Did'st thou see black Horses and red Cows, with white Sheep?'

There are, however, indications of some new developments in the English sources. In particular, there appears to be an increasing tendency to select VO order rather than OV:

(22) T <nee namen neskec kabay undogwa tekeny>
1.pers see black horse yonder woods
'I did see black Horses yonder in the woods'

(23) I <keeko kee lunse une>
what 2.pers name 3.pers
'What dost thou call this?'

Additional examples of SVO order from English sources can be seen in (2) and (21) above.

The preference for SVO order in the later stage makes sense, given the assumptions of the language contact model sketched in the previous section: there we proposed that the Dutch reduced the original six permutations of subject, verb, and object possible in Delaware by selecting only the two orders-SOV and SVO-possible in their own language. We can view the preference for SVO order in the English sources as a further case of reduction through selection: since English permits only SVO, the English-

speaking users of the pidgin selected the SVO alternative when communicating with the Delaware.

3 THE PUZZLE WITH *HATTA*

If the syntax of the English attestations of the pidgin is examined more closely, we find that there are six examples of OV order in our two main sources; of these six examples, four contain the verb of possession *hatta*. The question naturally arises as to why clauses containing *hatta* should retain the OV pattern longer than other constructions in the language.

3.1 *Frequency of hatta*

A first conjecture that one might make in accounting for the OV pattern with clauses containing *hatta* is to say that it is simply a reflection of the frequent use of possessive statements in the pidgin: it is well known that archaic or irregular forms are able to survive in frequently used constructions. But such an explanation seems inadequate. Nearly all of the verbs attested in Pidgin Delaware are frequently used verbs. Since the pidgin exhibits extreme lexical impoverishment, only a handful of verbs exist in the pidgin and these verbs are used in a wide variety of contexts. In other words, while it is true that the verb *hatta* ‘have’ is frequently used in the pidgin, it is also true that other verbs, such as *peta* ‘bring’ and *meele* ‘give’, are frequently used as well. Yet only *hatta* retains the preference for SOV order.

3.2 *Thomason's incorporation suggestion revisited*

A more substantial hypothesis is required to explain the unusual behavior of clauses containing *hatta*. We first consider a modified version of a suggestion made by Thomason (1980), but we will conclude that word-internal processes such as noun incorporation or denominal verbs are not related to the phenomenon seen in the pidgin.

Thomason (1980), in sketching her view that Pidgin Delaware arose from Algonquian-Iroquoian contacts, discusses the frequent use of SOV order in the pidgin and notes the “preponderance of *hatte* as the verb in the OV phrases” (Thomason 1980:177). She suggests that Delaware denominal verbs like the example below might have been an influence on the Pidgin Delaware construction:

- (24) wiyú·s + he· + w
meat + denominal.suffix + 3rd.sg
‘He has meat’ (Thomason 1980:178, citing Voegelin 1946:155)

According to Thomason, a closer analogue to the Pidgin Delaware construction is to be found in noun incorporation. She gives several examples of noun incorporation from Iroquoian languages, including the following from Oneida:

- (25) $la + n\wedge st + ay\wedge 'thos$ [[supposed to be an accent on the \wedge]]
 he + corn + plants
 ‘He is planting corn’ (Thomason 1980:179, citing Lounsbury 1953:75)

Though Thomason cites only Iroquoian examples, we may note that Delaware also exhibits noun incorporation comparable to the Iroquoian type:

- (26) $/n + k\grave{a}t + i \cdot naxke \cdot + xi \cdot n/ \rightarrow nk\grave{a}\check{c}i \cdot naxk\acute{e} \cdot xi \cdot n$
 1.pers + (go).out + arm + lie, be
 ‘My arm is sticking out’ (Munsee; Goddard 1990:467)
- (27) $/mo \cdot nah + ihp\grave{a}n + e \cdot + w/ \rightarrow mo \cdot nh\grave{i}hp\check{a}ne \cdot w$
 dig + potato + final + 3.sing
 ‘He digs potatoes’ (Munsee; Goddard 1990:456)

The suffix $-e \cdot$ in (27) is a stem-final morpheme often used with incorporated nouns; see Goddard (1990:466-7) for discussion.

Although we reject the central portion of Thomason’s claim, that the pidgin was used before European contact, we here consider a reduced portion of her argument, namely whether there is any connection between noun incorporation and the SOV order found with *hatta*. Could the Delaware construction in which a noun stem appears inside a complex verb stem be the model for the Pidgin Delaware construction with *hatta*? We conclude that there is no connection, for the reasons given below.

First of all, in all other constructions in which Delaware employs a morphological strategy to express grammatical relations, the European learners of the pidgin were unable to recognize word-internal grammatical elements. This includes subject and object inflection on verbs, possessive inflection on nouns, locative case on nouns, and participle inflection indicating a verb is being used in a relative clause. What we find instead in the pidgin for these constructions is imposition of Dutch features. Since these morphological strategies were opaque to the Dutch, we believe it is extremely unlikely that the linguistically naive Europeans who came into contact with the Delaware were able to parse a complex verb into its component parts, and to recognize that the medial element within the stem represents the nominal object of the verb.

Furthermore, the form of nominal stems incorporated into verbs in Algonquian languages is often quite different from the form of the stem used in an ordinary noun. In Munsee, for example, the stem for ‘head’ is $/-iil/$ when used as an ordinary noun; if ‘head’ is incorporated into a verb, the form of the stem is $/-aant\grave{a}p-/$ (O’Meara 1990:266-7). The Pidgin Delaware counterparts of such nouns invariably correspond to the ordinary noun form, not to the suppletive incorporating form (e.g. DeLaet $\langle wyer \rangle$, C $\langle wijr \rangle$, $\langle hwijl \rangle$, I $\langle wheel \rangle$ ‘head’).

It is also worth pointing out that the Pidgin Delaware verb *hatta* cannot be equated with the Delaware denominal suffix $-he \cdot$ seen in (24). As Thomason acknowledges elsewhere in her article, the source of *hatta* is Unami $h\acute{a}t \cdot e \cdot$ ‘it is (there)’. The syntax and use of *hatta* will be discussed at length in the following section.

A final reason for rejecting Thomason's suggestion regarding incorporation is that the object of *hatta* may be a conjoined NP, which is never possible with nouns incorporated into a verb:

- (28) T <Kee squa og enychan hatah?>
 2.pers woman and child have
 'Hast thou a Wife and Children?'

In short, we believe that the syntactic, morphological, and language contact arguments presented above demonstrate that noun incorporation cannot be the source of the anomalous behavior associated with the verb *hatta*.

4 THE ARGUMENT STRUCTURE OF *HATTA*

In this section we argue instead that two distinct argument structures associated with the verb *hatta* play a significant role in explaining its association with OV word order. We first make some general comments about the range of uses of the Pidgin Delaware verb *hatta*.

4.1 *Lexical extension of hatta in the pidgin*

As mentioned above, the Delaware source for the pidgin verb *hatta* is an Inanimate Intransitive verb of existence, Unami *hát·e·* 'it is (there)' (Goddard 1997:92). The Dutch clearly identified this verb with their own verb of possession, *hebben*, New Netherland Dutch *hæ* (Buccini 1995:241). In the Pidgin Delaware corpus, *hatta* is used to express a variety of possessive relations:

- (29) T <Nee hata orit poonk...>
 1.pers have good gunpowder
 'I have good Powder...'

- (30) T <Kee squa og enychan hatah?>
 2.pers woman and child have
 'Hast thou a Wife and Children?'

- (31) C <Nijr uránda hátte>
 1.pers heat/hot have
 'Jag är warmer/I am warm'

Note that *hatta* is used not only to express the possession of concrete objects such as gunpowder, in (29), but also to express abstract relationships such as kinship, as in (30). In Delaware proper, kinship is more typically expressed by verbs, as in Munsee *wúniicháanuw* 'he/she has a child, children' (O'Meara 1996:368). Even more abstract is the relation expressed by *hatta* in (31), which appears to be a calque on the Dutch expression *ik heb 't warm*. The use of *hatta* in sentences such as (30) and (31) may thus

be taken as further examples of the imposition of Dutch structures upon the Delaware target language.

4.2 *Existential and possessive uses of hatta*

Alongside clear examples, such as (29-31), of *hatta* being used as a transitive verb of possession, one also finds occasional uses of *hatta* in the pidgin that reflect its origin as an intransitive existential verb:

- (32) C <Wicking hatte>
house have/exist
‘Hemme i mitt huus/at home in my house’

(32) is the response to the following question:

- (33) C <Taan Atáppi>
where bow
‘Hwar är bågán/where is the bow?’

In other words, the question in (33) asks about the location of a certain bow, and the response in (32) must be analyzed as ‘[it] is in the house’, with a zero subject understood as referring to the bow, *wicking* expressing the oblique locative argument of the verb, and *hatta* as an intransitive existential verb, not a transitive verb of possession.

Additional examples of the existential use of *hatta* may be seen in the following:

- (34) C <Hocquæssung oromat hátte>
heaven far have/exist
‘Himmelen är långt ifrån oss/heaven is far from us’

- (35) C <Mochijrick Sackhang Bij hátte>
big wind water have/exist
‘Thet är stor storm på siön/
there is a great storm on the sea’

- (36) C <Mátta Sáckhang Bij hátte>
not wind water have/exist
‘Thet är stilla lugnet på siön/
there is still calmness on the sea’

In (34), *hatta* can only be analyzed as an existential verb, used to identify heaven as being far away. In (35), the most likely reading is that *mochijrick sakhang* ‘big wind’ is the subject of the existential use of *hatta*, and *bij* ‘water’ expresses the location of the big wind. In other words, (35) is another example of *hatta* being used as an existential verb, not as a transitive verb of possession. The same analysis can be given for (36), the negated version of (35). Note further that if *hatta* were a possessive verb in (35) and

(36), with a reading of ‘the water has/doesn't have a big wind’, the two sentences would exhibit OSV order. OSV order is not otherwise attested in the Pidgin Delaware corpus.

Now consider the following example, in which *hatta* is glossed by Campanius as a transitive verb of possession.

- (37) C <Matta âquijvan hatte>
 not cloth have/exist
 ‘Jag har intet kläde/I have no cloth’

On the possessive reading, (37) would be analyzed as having a zero subject, understood as referring to the speaker, and *âquijvan* ‘cloth’ would be the object of the verb. But notice that there is another interpretation possible for (37), one in which *hatta* is understood as an existential verb and where *âquijvan* is the subject. On the latter reading, (37) could be glossed ‘There is no cloth.’ Semantically, there is not too great a difference between the existential reading and the possessive reading for this example: there would be many situations in which either reading might be true.

We suggest that the key to understanding the late retention of OV word order in clauses containing *hatta* lies in the two argument structures associated with the verb, and in the use of structurally ambiguous sentences such as the one in (37). That is, suppose a speaker produces a sentence like (37), intending the intransitive existential reading ‘There is no cloth.’ Since *âquijvan* would be the subject, it would automatically appear to the left of the verb. An addressee, on the other hand, might hear (37) and interpret *hatta* as the transitive verb of possession. He would then conclude that the clause contains a zero subject, as frequently happens in Pidgin Delaware, with the object *âquijvan* appearing in a marked position before the verb. We might take this speculation a step further and conjecture that a native speaker of Delaware using the pidgin might be especially likely to have the intransitive variant of *hatta* in mind, since it corresponds closely to an intransitive verb in Delaware proper, and that a Dutch speaker hearing a sentence like (37) might be especially likely to interpret *hatta* as transitive, since *hatta* corresponds closely to the Dutch verb of possession.

Two examples from the Indian Interpreter may be evidence of the sort of reinterpretation of *hatta* that we posit here:

- (38) I <ahalea coon hatte>
 much snow have/exist
 ‘have abundance of snow’
- (39) I <singuap hockin hatte>
 be.quiet[?] earth have/exist
 ‘be quiet, the earth has them, they are dead’

The author of the Indian Interpreter glosses both (38) and (39) as if *hatta* were a transitive verb of possession. But a gloss of *hatta* as an existential verb seems to fit better the sense of each phrase: (38) would be ‘there is a lot of snow’ and (39) would be ‘[they] are in the earth [i.e., they are dead].’

5. CONCLUSION

In summary, we believe that the continued use of an intransitive existential construction with *hatta* may have reinforced the OV pattern with transitive *hatta* after the rest of the language moved toward VO syntax under English influence. Even so, it is interesting to note that two of the four sentences containing possessive *hatta* in Thomas exhibit VO order. This seems to strengthen the argument made above that Pidgin Delaware word order was undergoing a second process of reduction through selection, with English speakers rejecting the unfamiliar OV order and employing instead VO order, that is, the one order familiar to them from their own native language.

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