

Emerging Ds, possessives and partitives: evidence from Meadow Mari

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Proposal: This talk deals with the structure of noun phrases in Meadow Mari (Uralic). Specifically, I investigate the non-possessive use of the 3SG possessive suffix, for which I propose that it spells out a D^0 , with the possessor position being occupied by *pro*, whose referent is contextually determined ('fake possessives'). The empirical arguments are based on noun phrase ellipsis (NPE) and double possessive constructions in which a 3SG 'fake' possessive co-occurs with a regular possessor. The topic has implications for the emergence of Ds, the (re)analysis of possessives, the typology of partitive constructions as well as for the role of contrast in NPE.

Background: Mari nouns inflect for number, case and possessiveness; the morphemes may appear in various orders (Alhoniemi 1993; Riese et al. 2017; Simonenko & Leontyev 2012; Guseva & Weisser 2018; Pleshak 2019). Mari is an articleless language, but as in other Uralic languages, the 3SG poss suffix has non-possessive, determiner-like uses. Simonenko (2014, 2017) argues that in Mari, these non-possessive uses are limited to contexts with a proper subset antecedent, i.e., partitives: '(He bought 3 books). He is reading book-POSS:3SG (from those).'

NPE in Mari: Mari allows NPE in linguistic (inter-/intrasentential) contexts as well as in extralinguistic ones. The case morphology of the elided NP is never absent; it appears stranded onto the (last) remnant. Additionally, a 3SG poss suffix may also appear on the remnant (1).

(1) Nele sumka-t üstembalne, a kuštãlgã-žo polkãšto.

heavy bag-POSS:2SG on.table but light-POSS:3SG on.shelf

'Your heavy bag is on the table, and the/your light one is on the shelf.'

Based on novel data coming from my fieldwork, I argue that: ❶ the poss suffix is licit (and preferred) in NPE if the remnant and the correlate are understood to belong to a set (\rightarrow part-whole relation) and the remnant is interpreted as specific in the sense of Enç (1991); ❷ definite readings are also possible, subject to interspeaker variation. The former claim is in line with Simonenko's (2014, 2017) observations about the use of poss in non-elliptical contexts, the latter is not.

❶ is supported by cases in which poss *cannot* appear: neither a part-whole, nor a definite reading is possible in (2), as the antecedent clause does not contain a correlate for the remnant ('green dress' does not belong to the set of referents introduced in the antecedent clause) \rightarrow poss is out.

(2) Context: I show you several dresses, none of which is green, and ask: "Do you like them?"

(Mõlam) takšõm užar(gã)-(*že) kelša õle.

1SG.DAT generally green-POSS:3SG appeal.PRS.3SG be.PST.3SG

'Generally, I like green ones/I would prefer a green one.'

❷: the possessive suffix can be used with a part-whole reading (thus, indicating that the referent belongs to a set, cf. Enç 1991 and É. Kiss & Tánzos 2018 for Udmurt), but some speakers allow a definite use of the suffix, too. The two uses can be told apart with the following context:

(3) Mom baked pancakes.

a. Tudo kumãt-(š)-õm çolodil'nik-õš šõndõš, a kokãt-(š)-õm üstembake.
3SG three-POSS:3SG-ACC fridge-ILL put.PST.3SG but two-POSS:3SG-ACC onto.table

'She put three (of them) into the fridge and two (of them) on the table.' [part-whole]

b. %Maša kokãt-š-õm kočkãn, a Taña kumãt-š-õm.

Masha two-POSS:3SG-ACC eat.PRF.3SG but Tanya three-POSS:3SG-ACC

'Masha ate the two (from the table), and Tanya the three (from the fridge).' [definite]

In the proper subset context (3a), the use of poss on the numeral remnant is allowed and preferred by the speakers. Importantly, not all speakers allow the suffix in (3b). For those who don't, the suffix is limited to proper subset contexts (3a), but it is ungrammatical in the definite context (3b) (in the latter case, only a bare form can be used). Those who do accept (3b), however, use the suffix as a definiteness marker, obligatory in this context. Observe that the elliptical NP

is identical with the one in the antecedent clause not only wrt cardinality, as it also denotes the maximal plural entity that satisfies the description, maximality being one of the hallmarks of definiteness (Sharvy 1980; Link 1983; Dayal 2004; Križ 2016; Šimík & Demian 2020). The wellformedness of (3b) is important for two reasons. Firstly, on the descriptive level, it shows that *POSS:3SG* in Mari can be used in definite contexts (*pace* Simonenko 2014, 2017). Secondly, on a more general level, one of the arguments against the grammaticalization of *POSS* into definiteness markers in Uralic is that the non-possessive uses have been argued not to be obligatory (Fraurud 2001; Gerland 2014). But in (3b), *POSS* is obligatory for the speakers who can use it as [+def].

Analysis: I argue that the *POSS* suffix used in ellipsis is a D^0 and that it is required since the remnant belongs to a set and is contrasted with the other members of this set. Mari noun phrases contain the following functional projections, with *POSS* morphology occupying D and/or Poss:

- (4) a. $K \succ D \succ Num \succ N$ (McFadden 2004; Guseva & Weisser 2018)
 b. $K \succ Poss \succ N(+Num)$ (Simonenko & Leontjev 2012)
 c. $K \succ D \succ Poss \succ Num \succ N$ (Pleshak 2019)

① I argue that what is spelled out on the remnant is the higher *POSS* suffix which sits in D. This is supported by two pieces of evidence: (i) the 3SG morpheme on the remnant in (1) does not agree in ϕ -features with the possessor in the correlate ('bag-*POSS:2SG*'), thus, we are not dealing with a genuine possessive morpheme; (ii) while both *PL-POSS* and *POSS-PL* morpheme orders are fine with overt Ns in Mari (Alhoniemi 1993; Guseva & Weisser 2018), *POSS-PL* is degraded with possessor remnants, thus, only D^0 is spelled out under ellipsis (not illustrated for space reasons).

② I further propose that D^0 licenses a *pro* possessor in Spec,DP, the interpretation of which is determined by context; in ellipsis, *pro* is bound by the inter-/intrasentential antecedent. Thus, elliptical NPs in Mari are 'fake possessives'. Similar analysis has been proposed for other Uralic languages: in Hungarian, *POSS:3SG* has turned into an affective demonstrative and *POSS:3PL* into a partitivity marker, and an intermediate stage in both cases featured a construction in which the *POSS* sfx agreed with a *pro* possessor (cf. Halm 2018; É. Kiss & Tánzos 2018). Furthermore, I agree with Pleshak (2019) that Mari noun phrases contain both PossP and DP; this is supported by examples containing two *POSS* suffixes (discussed also in Simonenko 2014; Pleshak 2019):

- in (5), the noun bears two *POSS* suffixes. Im- (5) Uškal-**em-žā**-m māj užalem.
 portantly, the NP cannot be interpreted as a cow-*POSS:1SG-POSS:3SG-ACC* 1SG sell.PRS.1SG
 partitive construction; it is contrasted with ✓'As for my cow, I will sell (it).'
 other members of a contextually-given set. ✗'I will sell one of my cows.'

Although the interpretation of elliptical NPs like (3a) resembles the one of partitive constructions, the unavailability of partitive reading in (5) speaks against analysing them as (syntactic) partitives as in (6). Instead, I propose (7): the two *POSS* morphemes are hosted in separate heads; D^0 licenses a *pro* possessor, whose reference is determined by context. Importantly, *pro* cannot be bound by N → lack of partitive reading in (5) is predicted. Elliptical NPs are similar to (7): they contain the DP-shell in addition to the remnant and the nominal gap. (Further support for discarding (6) comes from the fact that Mari only utilizes 'among'-partitives, for which an adjunction analysis has been proposed, cf. Falco & Zamparelli 2019; von Heusinger & Kornfilt 2017.)

(6) [_{NumP} three [_{NP} [_{NP} PRO_i] [_{N'} PART [_{PP} of [_{DP} the [_{NP} people_i]]]]]]] (Falco & Zamparelli 2019)

(7) [_{DP} *pro* [_{D'} [_D 3SG POSS] [_{PossP} [_{Poss} 1SG POSS] [_{NP} ...]]]] (= (5))

③ The NP in (2) does not belong to a set and there is no correlate → the reference of *pro* cannot be determined and *POSS* is correctly predicted to be ungrammatical. Generally, elliptical constructions without a correlate are problematic cases of NPE (Sleeman 1993; Panagiotidis 2002; Saab 2018), but in Mari, they differ from the general NPE pattern wrt the use of *POSS*. *POSS* in Mari also seems to be sensitive to contrast: thus, supporting the idea that focus/contrast is

crucial in NPE (Giannakidou & Stavrou 1999; Eguren 2010; on the opposite view Alexiadou & Gengel 2012; Saab & Lipták 2016).

Selected references: É. Kiss, K. & O. Tánzos. 2018. From possessor agreement to object marking in the evolution of the Udmurt *-jez* suffix: A grammaticalization approach to morpheme syncretism. *Language* • Enç, M. 1991 The semantics of specificity. *LI* • Fraurud, K. 2001. Possessive with extensive use: A source of definite articles? In: *Dimensions of Possession* • Gerland, D. 2014. Definitely not possessed? Possessives with non-possessive function. In: *Frames and Concept Types* • Guseva, E. & P. Weisser. 2018. Postsyntactic reordering in the Mari nominal domain – Evidence from suspended affixation. *NLLT* • Pleshak, P. 2019. Morfosintaksis imennoy gruppy v finno-ugorskix jazykah Povolzhya. MGU thesis • Saab, A. 2018. Nominal ellipses. In: *The Oxford Handbook of Ellipsis* • Simonenko, A. 2014. Microvariation in Finno-Ugric possessive markers. In: *Proceedings of NELS 43*