Microvariation in Finno-Ugric possessive markers: three relational stories

Alexandra Simonenko

McGill University

LSALAA 2013, Paris 8
### Polyfunctionality of 3SG (Komi)

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<td></td>
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<td>Pon-nyd</td>
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<td>‘your (pl.) dog’</td>
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Polyfunctionality of 3SG (Komi)

- Head marking of a possessive relation:

  (1) Petra-lyn ponm-\textit{ys}
      Petr-\textsc{gen} dog-\textit{3sg}
      ‘Petja’s dog’

- Non-possessive use:

  (2) Šond-\textit{ys} dep-š’i-s.
      Sun-\textit{3sg} dep-\textsc{detr-prt.3sg}
      ‘The sun has set.’
Introduction

Research question

What is the status of 3SG on its non-possessive use?
Introduction

Background

Status of non-possessive uses of 3sg in Finno-Ugric as a group

- Collinder (1955:203): “an equivalent of the English definite article” (and references in Nikolaeva 2003)

- Kuznetsova (2012:260): “At present we do not have enough evidence to talk about homophonous possessive, deictic and definite suffixes” (translation mine – A.S.). A. I. Kuznetsova analyses possessive markers as cumulatively expressing several categories, including definiteness.
Status of non-possessive uses of 3sg in Finno-Ugric as a group

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Status of non-possessive uses of 3sg in Finno-Ugric as a group

- Nikolaeva (2003:135): “...the use of the 3rd person possessive affix in Uralic is comparable to the uses of the definite article in article languages and includes: (i) a direct anaphoric use; (ii) an immediate situation use, and (iii) a larger situation use (cf. Hawkins 1978 for English). However, the affix is not obligatory in any of these functions and so has not become fully grammaticalized. It is **not possible to speak of the emergence of the category of article in the languages in question.**” Similar in Fraurud (2001)

- Gerland (2011): Relational Suffix: 1) “referent is anchored by another, already unique referent”; or 2) “referent is semantically or pragmatically unique”.

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Gerland (2011): Relational Suffix: 1) “referent is anchored by another, already unique referent”; or 2) “referent is semantically or pragmatically unique”.
Current contribution

- Non-possessive uses follow different patterns in different Finno-Ugric languages.
  - **Mari** (Meadow, village Staryj Torjal, Mari El republic)
  - **Khanty** (Shuryshkarskij dialect, village Tegi, Khanty-Mansi district)
  - **Komi** (Izhem, village Muzhi, Yamal-Nenets district)

- The semantics of the non-possessive use in each case is qualitatively different from that of “classic” definite articles.

- A common grammatical denominator can be found with a proper semantic implementation; we do not have to talk about under-grammaticalization.
Non-possessive uses follow different patterns in different Finno-Ugric languages.

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1 Introduction

2 Patterns of non-possessive use of 3SG
   - Komi pattern
   - Mari pattern
   - Khanty pattern

3 Analysis
Outline

1. Introduction

2. Patterns of non-possessive use of 3SG
   - Komi pattern
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3. Analysis
Non-possessive use in Komi

Anaphoric antecedent

(3) Me mun-i uliča kuza i add-il-i pon. I walk-PRT street along and see-ITER-PRT dog
Ponm-*(ys) kuč-i-s uut-ny.
dog-*({3SG}) start-PRT-3 bark-INF
‘I was walking down the street and saw a dog. The dog started barking.’ [Kashkin 2008]
Non-possessive use in Komi

Referent belongs to a known group

(3) Lavka təryt va-i-sny kuim pyzan. Ton mi store yesterday bring-PRT-3PL three table today we yti pyzan-??(se) n’eb-i-m.
one table-??(3SG.ACC) buy-PRT-1PL
‘Yesterday they brought three tables to (the/a) store. Today we bought one table.’
Non-possessive use in Komi

Referent known from a local situation

(3) ə́bes-* (se) sipt-i!
door-3sG.ACC close-IMP
‘Close the door!’  [Kashkin 2008]
Non-possessive use in Komi

Referent known from a global situation

(3) Šond-*\(ys\) dep-š’-i-s.  
Sun-*\(3\text{SG}\) dep-DETR-PRT-3\text{SG}  
‘The sun has set.’
Komi Pattern Summary

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Licensing contexts of 3SG</th>
<th>anaph. antc.</th>
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Patterns of non-possessive use of 3SG
Mari pattern

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3. Analysis
Non-possessive use in Mari

Anaphoric antecedent – NO

(4) Vasja kniga-m nal-ən. Tač’e tudo (tide)
Vasja book-ACC buy-NARR.3SG today he (that)
kniga-(*ž)-əm lud-eš.
book-(*3SG)-ACC read-PRS.3SG
‘Vasja bought a book. Today he is reading that book.’
Non-possessive use in Mari

Referent belongs to a known group (I)

(4) Vasja kum kniga-m nal-ən. Tač’e ik
Vasja three book-ACC buy-NARR.3SG today one
kniga-ž-əm tude lud-eš.
book-3SG-ACC he read-PRS.3SG
‘Vasja bought three books. Today he is reading a book
(from those).’
Non-possessive use in Mari

Referent belongs to a known group (II)

(4) Məj-ən nəl uškal-em ulo. məj ikt-əژ-əm/ikt-əm
I-GEN four cow-1SG is. I one-3SG-ACC/one-acc
užal-ən-em.
sell-DESID-PRS.1SG
‘I have four cows. I want to sell one of them.’

a. Uškal-že šiž-eš što məj tud-əm užal-em
cow-3SG feel-PRS.3SG that I he-ACC sell-PRS.1SG
‘The cow feels that I’m going to sell it.’ [SOMEONE ELSE’S]
b. *Uškal-em šiž-eš što məj tud-əm užal-em
cow-1SG feel-PRS.3SG that I he-ACC sell-PRS.1SG
Intended: ‘The cow feels that I’m going to sell it.’
c. Uškal-em-že šiž-eš što məj tud-əm užal-em
cow-1SG-3SG feel-PRS.3SG that I he-ACC sell-PRS.1SG
‘The cow feels that I’m going to sell it.’
Non-possessive use in Mari

Referent belongs to a (deictically) known group (III)

(4) Mem-na-n škol-na u, a tengeče alakö we-1PL-GEN school-1PL new but yesterday someone ??(tide) okna-ž-əm šal-alt-en ??(that) window-3SG-ACC break-DETR-PRT ‘Our school is new, but yesterday someone broke that window.’ [pointing to one window]
Patterns of non-possessive use of 3SG
Mari pattern

## Non-possessive use in Mari

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<td>(4) Petərəza omsa-(*ź)-əm!</td>
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<td>close-IMP door-(*3SG)-ACC</td>
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Non-possessive use in Mari

Referent known from a global situation – NO

(4) Yara šinga dene *keč’-əš-(*še) onč-aš og lij bare eye with sun-LAT-(*3sg) look-INF neg be ‘One shouldn’t look at the sun with unprotected eyes.’
### Komi & Mari Pattern Summary

#### Licensing contexts of 3sg

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Patterns of non-possessive use of 3sg

Khanty pattern

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3. Analysis
Non-possessive use in Khanty

Anaphoric antecedent (I)

(5) Vasja joh hoč’a laəm-yn sevyrm-əs. Joh-*(əΔ)
    Vasja tree at   axe-LOC bring.down-PST tree-*(3SG)
    iʃ rakn-əs.
    down fall-PST
    ‘Vasja hit the tree with an axe. The tree fell.’
Non-possessive use in Khanty

Anaphoric antecedent (II)

   today eat.1PL
   ‘Yesterday my mother bought a fish. Today we ate this fish.’
Non-possessive use in Khanty

Referent belongs to a known group – NO

(5)  a.  ᵹx@m pur  ne  juxan kima@-әn
three  woodpecker woman  river  edge-LOC
nuo@-әt...
live-NPST-3PL
‘Three woodpecker women live by the river...’

b.  ...S’a@ta i  pur  ne  s’ar-әt
then  one woodpecker woman  tell.fortunes-INF
omsәmti-j-ә
sit-OBL-NPST.3SG
‘...Then one woodpecker woman sits down to tell fortunes.’ [MSU Linguistics 2011–2012]
Non-possessive use in Khanty

Referent known from a local situation – NO

(5)  c’i amp-(*əʌ) takan navar-əʌ.
that dog-(*3SG) strong run-NPST
‘This dog runs fast.’
Non-possessive use in Khanty

Referent known from a global situation – NO

(5) Vunt jis-teln vuÀ.
    forest forever be.PST
    ‘The forest has always existed.’
### Licensing contexts of 3sg

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3 Analysis
Restating the observations

- Khanty: 3SG marks a noun if the referent is identical to a recently introduced one.
- Mari: 3SG marks a noun if the referent belongs to a group mentioned in the previous discourse/pointed at.
- Komi: 3SG marks a noun if the intended referent belongs to a set of individuals whose existence is part of the Common Ground.
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Analysis: three relations

Three individual-set relations

Common denominator: Relation to a set with presupposed existence.

- Khanty: singleton anaphoric set
- Mari: non-singleton anaphoric/deictic set
- Komi: Common Ground set
Analysis: three relations

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3SG is not a definite article

- Definite article: Fregean uniqueness & existence presuppositions (and much subsequent literature)
- 3SG: only existential quantification (over the intersection of \([N]\) and a relevant set).
Analysis: three relations

3SG is not a definite article

- Definite article: Fregean uniqueness & existence presuppositions (and much subsequent literature)
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Is this all there is to it?

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Concluding remarks

Is this all there is to it? No. Tentatively:

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Some Consequences

**Expectation**

- **Mari:** Two Suffixes should be able to co-occur since a set of “my things” is different from a locally introduced set (from the semantic standpoint).
- **Komi:** Two Suffixes should not be able to co-occur because the set of “my things” is just a subset of things with presupposed existence.
### Some Consequences

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užal-əŋ-em...
sell-DESID-PRS.1SG
‘I have four cows. I want to sell one of them...’

(7) ...uškal-em-že šiž-eš što məj tud-əm
...cow-1SG-3SG feel-PRS.3SG that I he-ACC
užal-em
sell-PRS.1SG
‘...that cow of mine feels that I’m going to sell her.’
Analysis

Some Consequences

Possessive suffix co-occurrence is possible in Mari but not in Komi

(6) Sy-a mösk-(*ym)-ys čuvstvujt-ö, myj me that-NOM cow-(*1SG)-3SG feel-PRS.3SG that I möd-a sij-ö vuzoo-ny want-PRS.1SG that-ACC sell-INF

‘That cow (*of mine) feels that I want to sell her.’
Conclusions

- Language-specific patterns are consistent: the sphere of 3SG is delimited by categorical judgements.
- 3SG grammaticalizes a category different from **DEFINITENESS** – one whose semantics does not involve a uniqueness presupposition.
I’m very thankful to Jessica Coon, Luis Alonso-Ovalle, Bernhard Schwarz, and Svetlana Y. Toldova for multiple discussions.

Thanks for helpful comments to the audiences at McGill Syntax-Semantics Reading Group, Finno-Ugric Studies Association of Canada (FUSAC), and NELS 43.


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Collinder, Björn.  
*Comparative grammar of the Uralic languages.*
Stockholm: UP.

Possessives with extensive use.  

Osobennosti upotreblenija posessivnyh pokazatelej v izhemskom dialekte komi-zyrjanskogo jazyka.  

Kuznetsova, Ariadna I. 2012.  
Kumuljatsija grammatititcheskih znatchenij v agglutinativnyh pokazateljah: deiktitcheskie funktsii posessiva v ural'skih jazykah.  

Possessive affixes as markers of information structuring: Evidence from Uralic.  
In *International Symposium on Deictic Systems and Quantification in Languages spoken in Europe and North and Central Asia*, eds. P. Suihkonen and B. Comrie, 130–145. Izhevsk; Leipzig: Udmurt State University; Max Planck Institute of Evolutionary Anthropology.