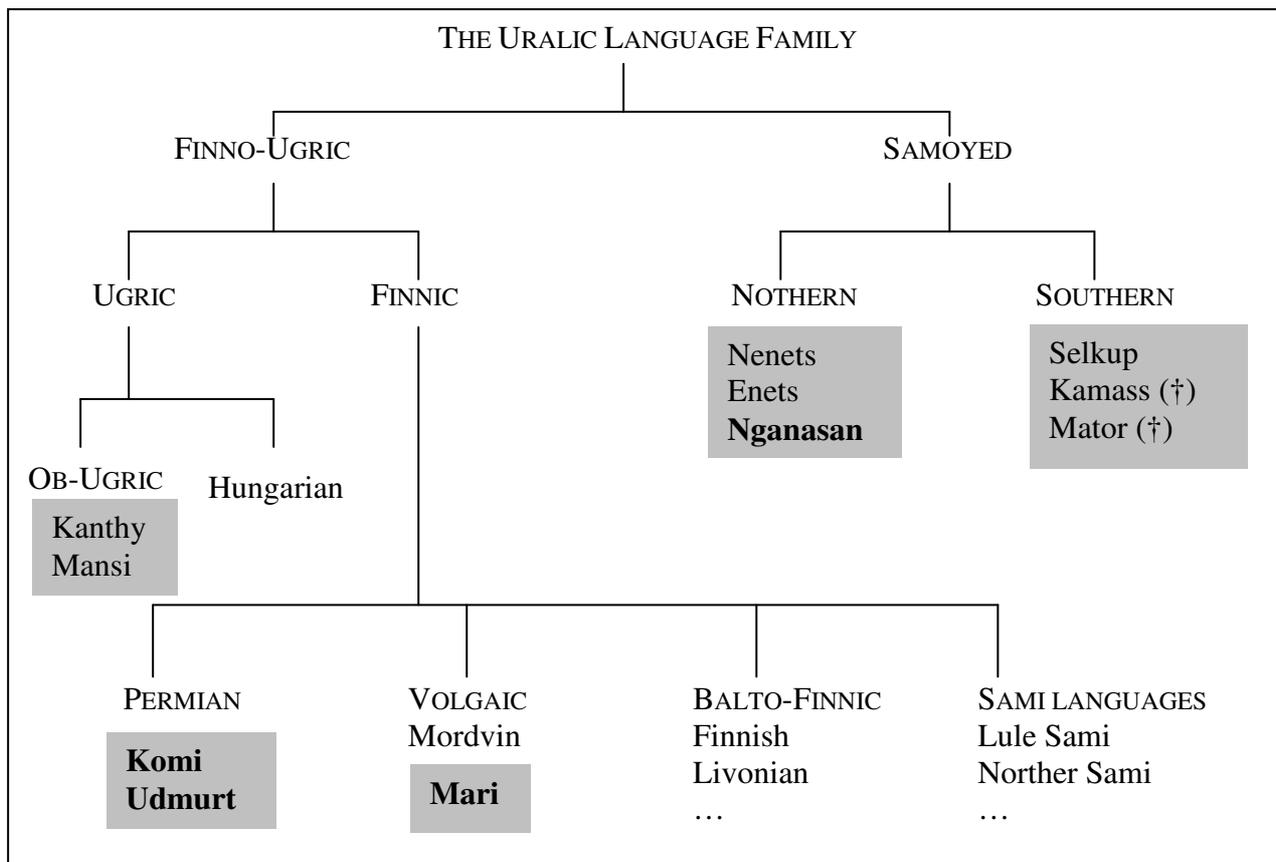


## From possessive suffixes to definite articles



### 1. Possession and definiteness marking in Uralic languages

#### 1.1 Possession marking

The basic function of a possessive construction is to encode the relationship between two entities (Barker 1995).

Expression of possessive relationships in Uralic languages:

- ◆ Case (genitive, dative, ablative)
- ◆ Pronoun/possessive pronoun
- ◆ Predicative constructions
- ◆ Possessive suffixes

(1) Udmurt: *tir-e*  
axe-POSS1SG  
'my axe'

(2) Komi: *nyl-ys*  
daughter-POSS3SG  
'his/her daughter'

Possessive suffixes are not restricted in their use as possessive markers, they mark e.g. alienable (1) and inalienable (2) possession.

Possessive suffixes can co-occur with other possessive markers (e.g. case).

Additional case-marking on the possessor in: Hungarian, Mari, Mordvin, Komi, Udmurt, Nenets, Enets, Nganasan and Selkup.

## 1.2 Definiteness marking

- Free articles (Hungarian): definite article *a* (*a ház*, def. house), indefinite article *egy*
- Definite vs. indefinite declension (Mordvin)
- Word order
- Subject/object case-contrast
- Verbal conjugation (Hungarian, Ob-Ugric, Samoyedic, Mordvin)

► Most of the Uralic languages lack definite articles.

Some of the languages without articles assign their possessive suffixes an additional function: They are used to indicate the definiteness of the marked referent.

## 2. Possessives with non-possessive use

Collinder (1955:203): “In all the Uralic languages except Fennic, Lappish (=Sami), Mordvin and Hungarian, the possessive suffix of the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular can be used as an equivalent of the English definite article.”

(3) Udmurt (Alatyrev 1970: 85)

<i>turyn-ez</i>		<i>čeber</i>
meadow- 3SG		beautiful
‘The meadow is beautiful.’		

(4) Komi (Serebrennikov 1963:135)

<i>Oj,</i>	<i>ilyn</i>	<i>əd</i>	<i>sije</i>	<i>Kijev-yd</i>	<i>musa</i>	<i>nylej</i>
Oh	far	is	DEM	Kiev-2SG	dear	girl
„Oh, Kiev is far away, this girl.“						

Observations and additions:

- 2<sup>nd</sup> singular possessive suffix is used for indicating definiteness
- definiteness marker can be combined with a demonstrative

Schroeder (2006:587): “Nouns expressing concepts with unique referents are marked with the 3<sup>rd</sup> possessive suffix while 2<sup>nd</sup> possessive suffixes express anaphoric use of a noun.”

(5) Komi (Nikolaeva 2001:3):

<i>šondi-ys</i>		<i>nebo-ys</i>
sun-3SG		sky-3SG
‘the sun’		‘the sky’

(6) Nganasan (Bechert 1993:35):

<i>ηou- du</i>		<i>məu- du</i>
sky-3SG		earth-3SG
‘the sky’		‘the earth’

(7) Komi (Klumpp 2009: 326/7)

*Men jen s'et-is mös da ösh.*  
I-DAT god give-PRT3SG cow and ox  
'God gave me a cow and an ox.'

*Vaj let't's-am da ösh-sö nat's'k-am a mös-sö vid'z'-am.*  
Bring.IMP2SG go.down-PL and ox-ACC3SG butcher-PL but cow-ACC3SG keep-PL  
'Come on, let's go down and butcher the ox, but let's keep the cow.'

Observation and addition:

- The 3<sup>rd</sup> person possessive suffixes are used to indicate anaphoric reference, too (contrary to Schroeder 2006).

Künnap (2004: 62): "Likewise, in Zyrian Komi there is a tendency, namely when the 3<sup>rd</sup> possessive suffix indicates general definiteness, then, additionally, the 2<sup>nd</sup> possessive suffix indicates that the talk is about something which is just here, near, that may be pointed at during conversation."

(8) Komi (Künnap 2004)

a *Ver-as lïmj-ïš sïlema n'in*  
forest-INESS.3SG snow-3SG melted already  
'In the forest the snow has melted already.'

b *Ver-ad lïmj-ïd sïlema n'in*  
forest-INESS.2SG snow-2SG melted already  
'In the forest the snow has melted already.'

Rédei (1978): „emotional distance“

Schlachter (1960): „subjectivization“

### 3. Possessives as definite articles?

#### 3.1 Functions and characteristics of definite articles

Classification of the use of definite articles (Hawkins 1978):

- ♦ direct anaphoric use: *a car ... the car*
- ♦ associative anaphoric use: *a book ... the author*
- ♦ immediate situation use: [in a car] *press the clutch!*
- ♦ larger situation use: [in Great Britain] ... *the queen; the sun*

Kinds of uniqueness indicated by the definite article (Löbner 1985, Gerland&Horn 2010)

- ♦ Pragmatic uniqueness: dependent on special situations and contexts for the non-ambiguity (and existence) of a referent  
*the book you bought yesterday*
- ♦ Semantic uniqueness: referent established independently of the immediate situation or context of utterance, the referent is inherently unique  
*the sun, the pope*

### 3.2 Use of possessive suffixes as definiteness markers

Direct anaphoric use:

- (9) Komi (Klumpp 2006: 326/7)  
*Men jen s'et-is mös da ösh.*  
 I-DAT god give-PRT3SG cow and ox  
 'God gave me a cow and an ox.'

*Vaj let't's-am da ösh-sö nat's'k-am a mös-sö vid'z'-am.*  
 Bring.IMP2SG go.down-PL and ox-ACC3SG butcher-PL but cow-ACC3SG keep-PL  
 Come on, let's go down and butcher the ox, but let's keep the cow.'

Associative anaphoric use:

- (10) Mari (Bechert 1993:33)  
*aza šoceš awa-še mōlam pua aza-m*  
 baby be.born mother-3SG I-ALL give baby-ACC  
 'When a baby is born the mother gives the baby to me.'

Immediate situation use:

- (11) Komi (Nikolaeva 2001:7)  
*wanta tām mašinaj-en jowra mǎnəs*  
 look DEM car-2SG away drive.3SG  
 'Look, the car has driven away.'

Larger situation use:

- (12) Nganasan (Tereščenko 1979:95)  
*məu-δu sürü ŋilenu čimə*  
 earth-3SG is covered by snow  
 'The earth is covered by snow'

The possessive suffixes with non-possessive function occur in all typical uses.

## 4. Pathways to definiteness

### 4.1 Grammaticalization pathway of Indo-European definite articles

(Bybee 1984, Greenberg 1978/1991, Heine&Kuteva 2002, Himmelmann 1997, Traugott 1990)

#### A. Grammaticalization (change) of the form

- Demonstrative pronoun (Old High German: *theser*)  
 ► demonstrative determiner  
 ► weak demonstrative determiner  
 ► definite article (OHG: *ther*)  
 (► affixal article ► ...)



### 4.3 Possible Pathways to definiteness

Discourse functions of possessive suffixes in Komi, Udmurt, Nganasan and Mari:

- Indicating possessive relation between a possessor and a possessee
- Indicating the semantic and pragmatic uniqueness of a referent
- Establishing any kind of relation (e.g. concrete, associative) between two entities

#### → Relational suffix (RX)

Relational suffix in possessive NPs:

- The RX-marked referent is anchored by another, already unique referent. The link is more or less concrete (kinship, part-whole, ownership, control).
- The RX-marked referent is semantically or pragmatically unique.

Relational suffixes in non-possessive NPs:

- The RX-marked referent is anchored by association through cultural knowledge or through the discourse situation. The link is associative (in a broad sense).
- The RX-marked referent is thus semantically or pragmatically unique.

(13) Mari (Berezcki 1990: 43):

*Wüt-šö joŋa, ser-že kodeš*  
 water-RX3SG runs bank-RX3SG remains  
 ‘The water is running (and) the riverbank remains.’

(14) Udmurt (Alatyrev 1970: 85):

*Guzdor vylŋ turyn-ez čeber*  
 field on grass- RX3SG beautiful  
 ‘The grass on the field is beautiful.’

(15) Komi (Nikolaeva 2001:8):

*So ed kučem šuda sevetskej mort-yd!*  
 here PART which happy soviet man-RX2SG  
 ‘How happy is the soviet man!’

(16) Mari (Nikolaeva 2001:3):

*Tup sumləŋ woj-əl ul*  
 only stripy animal-RX3SG is  
 ‘There are completely stripy animals’

Grammaticalization pathway of the relational suffixes:

Hypothesis 1:

Personal pronoun ► relational suffix  $\begin{cases} \blacktriangleright \text{Possession marking} \\ \blacktriangleright \text{Definiteness marking (► generic use)} \end{cases}$

Hypothesis 2:

Pers. Pron. ► RX ► RX in possessive use ► RX in non-possessive use (► generic use)

#### 4.4 Two kinds of non-possessive relational suffixes.

Choice of whether 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> person:

Speakers assumption about hearers cognitive status (cf. Accessibility Theory, Ariel 1990; Givenness Hierachy, Gundel et. al 1996)

Function of the 2<sup>nd</sup> person suffix:

Speaker assumes hearer and marked referent to be pragmatically linked (cf. Schlachter 1960, Nikolaeva 2001).

Komi

(17a) *V̅er-as*                      *l̅imj-ɨs*                      *s̅ilema n'in*  
forest-RX3SG                      snow-RX3SG melted      already  
'In the forest the snow has melted already.'

(17b) *V̅er-ad*                      *l̅imj-ɨd*                      *s̅ilema n'in*  
forest-INESS.RX2SG      snow-RX2SG melted      already  
'In the forest the snow has melted already.'

Mari (Kangasmaa-Minn 1997 :229)

(18) *kugužan üd^ər-et*  
weeping princess-2SGPOSS  
"The princess is weeping"

Nganasan (Terešženko 1979:95)

(19) *Barbδauŋ xonti koptua, koptua-rə*      *t'etuami hehaŋku*  
master.GEN is      girl      girl-POSS2SG      very      pretty  
"The master has a daughter, the daughter is very pretty."

## 5. Conclusion

Relational suffix (~~possessive suffix~~)

Main function of the relational suffix:

- Establishing a (concrete or associative) relation
  - Concrete (more or less) relations are possessive relations, the marked referent is the possessum, the suffix indicates number and person of the possessor. The definite content of the relational suffix is not focused.
  - Associative relations are non-possessive relations, the marked referent is (semantically or pragmatically) unique and definite. The possessive content of the suffix is not focused. Depending on speakers assumption about hearers relation to the marked referent the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> person suffix is used.

The relational suffix developed out from personal pronouns. Further evidence for the status of the relational suffix: objective conjugation (the set of relational suffixes occurs on the verbal conjugation, which is used when the direct object is definite).

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