

# Possessive suffixes in constructions with quantifiers in Permic languages

Natalia Serdobolskaya

Institute of Linguistics, Russian Academy of Sciences/Pushkin State Russian  
language Institute

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# Outline of the talk

- 1. The puzzle of indefinite possessive NPs in Permic.
- 2. “Referential function” of possessive expressions.
- 3. Morphosyntax of “indefinite sub-set constructions”.
- 4. Conclusions

1. The puzzle of indefinite possessive NPs in Permic

# Background on possessives in Permic

- Possessive markers in Permic languages are widely used outside the contexts that have been described as possessive relations [Aikhenvald, Dixon 2013].
- In particular, they can signal definiteness [Schlachter 1960, Suihkonen 2005, Edygarova 2010, Winkler 2011, Collinder 1957: 276, Tauli 1966: 148; Klumpp 2008, 2014].
- As a consequence, there are works that consider the hypothesis of grammaticalization of possessive markers in Permic as definite articles [Fraurud 2001].

# Possessive markers signaling afore-mentionedness

Beserman Udmurt

pot-on'-n'ig-a-m

go.out-VN-NLOC-LOC/ILL-P.1(SG)

mašina-ez lež'-ono

car-ACC let-DEB

**mašina-ez=no**

car-P.3(SG)=ADD

šusa

COMPL

dugd-i-z.

stop-PST-3(SG)

**mašina**

car

dugd-i=no

stop-PST(1SG)=ADD

lâkt-e.

come-PRS.3SG

'As I went out (of the building), a car approached. I stopped to let the car go by, **the car** stopped, as well.' [C]

# Indefinite “definites”: the puzzle

However, possessive markers can be used in contexts that require an indefinite reading:

Pechora Komi-Zyrian

kutčəm-kə	iz-jas	seni	da	myj	da.	<b>iz-sə</b>
what.like-INDEF	stone-PL	there	and	what	and	stone-ACC.P.3(SG)
boš't-i-s	žep-a-s			š'uj-i-s		ət'ik-a-s
take-PST-3(SG) P.INESS/ILL-P.3(SG)	pocket-P.INESS/ILL-P.3(SG)			poke-PST-3(SG)		one-

{A man found a hut in the wood. There were chests and barrels inside. He opened one barrels.} There was sand and stones inside or something like that. He took **one of the stones** and poked it into his pocket, into one of his pockets.' [C]

 POSS encode indefinite elements of a definite set or part of a mass.

# Indefinite “definites”: the puzzle

- They also occur with indefinite pronouns:

Pechora Komi-Zyrian

<b>ət'ik-sə</b>	šu-i-s-ny	Pedəš'əj-ən	i	məd-sə
one-ACC.P.3(SG) ACC.P.3(SG)	say-PRT-3-PL	Fedosiy-INSTR		and other-
Al'ona-an	vot			
Alyona-INSTR		here		

(Eremey had two children.) 'One of them was called Fedosiy and the other one Alyona.' [C]

Possessives also occur with interrogative pronouns:

Udmurt (Beserman)

a      **kud-iz**      petux-ez?      ted'i-jez      il'i      gord-ez?

and    which-P.3(SG)      rooster-P.3(SG)      white-P.3(SG)      or  
         red-P.3(SG)

'Which of the roosters? The white one or the red one?' [C]

The elements in question focus constitute new information; however, they can take possessive markers.



# Indefinite “definites”: the puzzle

- Finally, they are used with quantifiers and numerals (in contexts of indefiniteness)

Udmurt (Beserman)

<b>ž'až'eg</b>	<b>pi-jed=pe</b>	<b>kâk-ez</b>	even'	tare,
goose	son-P.2(SG)-CIT	two-P.3(SG)	not.more	then
«ma-lâ	kâk-ez	u-z	luâ?»	
what-DAT	two-P.3(SG)	NEG-3	become(SG)	

‘She said, two of your baby geese are lost, why are they not here?’ [C]

# Another puzzle: the marker must be 3.SG

- Pechora Komi-Zyrian

una	kn'iga-sə	e-n	boš't.
many	book-ACC.P.3(SG)	NEG-2	take

[The boy is borrowing some books from the speaker.] 'Don't take many books (you won't manage to read them).' [E]

# The goal of this study

- WHY do Permic languages make use of possessive markers in these contexts?
- WHY do they use 3.SG for contexts where the possessor is the speaker/hearer?

The clue:

- Common feature of all the examples given above: they all refer to a subset of a definite set. This use is described in terms of partitive specificity in [Klumpp 2008: 125–127].

2. “Referential function” of  
possessive expressions

# Material and methodology

- Pechora dialect of Komi-Zyrian
- Beserman dialect of Udmurt

## Methods:

- elicitation in April 2019 in the village of Shamardan, Udmurt Republic
- elicitation in 2002-2003 in the village of Yeremeyevo, Komi Republic
- corpus analysis:

[http://web-corpora.net/KomiTexts/  
beserman.ru](http://web-corpora.net/KomiTexts/beserman.ru)

- Permic POSS are widely used to encode afore-mentionedness:

Pechora Komi-Zyrian

viž'əd-a-m                      a                      **ošk-ys**                      kotərt-ə                      mijan-yš'  
 loot-NPST-1PL                      and                      bear-P.3(SG) run-PRS.3SG we.OBL-EL  
 bok-ə                      vər-lan'.  
 side-ILL                      forest-APPROX

(My sister shouted that she saw **a bear**.) 'We look and see the bear running by our side towards the wood.' [C]

- Based on similar data, many authors argue that Permic possessives can be analyzed as definiteness markers.

- However, [Suihkonen 2005; Klumpp 2008, 2014; Fraurud 2011; Serdobolskaya, Usacheva, Arkhangelskiy 2019] show that POSS have not grammaticalized in this function:
- first, they are not obligatory in contexts of definiteness
- second, they can be used in contexts of indefiniteness, non-referential contexts etc.

# Definition of definiteness

- Formal semantic works describe definiteness based on exhaustivity: the referent should be uniquely identified in a given context. It does not necessarily presuppose familiarity to the hearer:

*Go into the next room and bring me the bag of chips lying on the bed.*  
[Birner, Ward 1994]

- non-familiar, but uniquely identifiable object



- [von Fintel 1994]: the referent must be identified in a given context, and not in the whole world:

*Everyone had a great time.* [von Fintel 1994: 28]

Thus, everyone does not mean “everyone in the world”, but “everyone in the given situation”, e.g. at a party.

- [Sharvy 1980]: plural definites are characterized with the notion of maximality:

*The books arrived.*

Here the referent is defined as the maximal number of books fitting the description in a given context.

- Prepositive genitives in English, French and some other languages also require the exhaustivity condition [Barker 2011]:

*My children are smart.* (Barker 2011: 1118)

*Harold's tools are over there.*

- Barker (2011): “All of Harold’s tools (at least, all of Harold’s tools that are going to be relevant for present conversational purposes)” [Barker 2011: 1118]. This condition is not fulfilled if the POSS is in predicative position, *John is my friend.*

- By contrast, Permic POSS do not require maximality:

Udmurt (Beserman)

kal'	<b>petuk-me</b>		vand-ono	val	tože, marêm	kâk
now	rooster-ACC.P.1(SG)		cut-DEB	be.PST	also HES	two
petuk,	no	mar-ke	so <...>	so	mar-ke...	l'abom-i-z
rooster	but	what-INDEF	that	that	what-INDEF	grow.weak-PST-3(SG)

'I need to slaughter one of my roosters, I have two, and this one grew somewhat weak.' [C]

Pechora Komi-Zyrian

**č'oj-əj**      gətyr-a,      mužyk-a      že.

sister-P.1SG wife-ATTR    man-ATTR    PTCL

‘(We went fishing and first went to my sister’s village.) My sister is already married.’ [K]

- Maximality is not required also when POSS are used with aforementioned NPs:

Udmurt (Beserman)

<b>nomâr-ze=no</b>	tros=ges	l'uka-j,	možet=pi,
worm-ACC.P.3(SG)=ADD	many-CMPR	collect-PST-1s	may.be=AUTOCIT
zək	tros	kut-o	č'orâg.
big	many	catch-FUT(1SG)	fish

(I want to go fishing, and went to the vegetable garden to collect some worms.)  
 'I took many worms (As for worms, I took them many) hoping to catch many fish.' [C]

- Thus, Permic POSS can be used to encode an indefinite part of a definite set. This meaning is also attested with POSS in Izhma dialect of Komi-Zyrian and Meadow Mari [Simonenko 2017; Simonenko in press]. The analysis suggested by [Simonenko 2017] :
  - (i)  $[[3sg]]^{g,c} ([[table]]^{g,c})([[i]]^{g,c})$  is defined if  $g(i)$  is not a speaker or hearer, if defined,  $[[3sg]]^{g,c} ([[table]]^{g,c})([[i]]^{g,c}) = \lambda x . \lambda s . x$  is a table in  $s$  and  $R(x) (g(i))$ , where  $R =$  possession, inclusion, context, discourse situation [Simonenko 2017]
- Both possessive and non-possessive uses are involved.

- Thus, Permic POSS should not be described as definiteness markers, rather as “referential markers”, see the analysis of [Simonenko 2017]. They must be anchored in the context or situation.
- This explains why they can be used both if referring to the aforementioned participant or to the subset of aforementioned participants.



## Pechora Komi-Zyrian

a.    n'əb           kutčəm-kə           **kož'in / \*kož'in-sə.**  
      buy.IM P    what.like-INDEF gift /    gift-ACC.P.3(SG)

'Buy him a gift.' [E]

b.    š'et                   kutčəm-kə           **kož'in-sə.**  
      give.IM P           какой-INDEF       подарок-ACC.P.3(SG)

'Give him one of the gifts (we bought yesterday).' [E]

- Adding the POSS changes the meaning of the indefinite pronoun from “indefinite” to “indefinite from a definite set”.
- The meaning of the POSS is, hence, ‘referential anchoring’, rather than definiteness itself.

Udmurt (Beserman)

a. **mar-jos** ton so bətč'a tros baš't-i-d?

what-PL you that number many take-PST-2(SG)

'What have you bought, so many?' [E]

b. **mar-jos-se** ton baš't-i-d – mus-se=a,

what-PL-ACC.P.3(SG) you take-PST-2(SG) liver-  
ACC.P.3(SG)-Q

š'ulem-ze=a, ty-ze=a?

heart-ACC.P.3(SG)-Q lung-ACC.P.3(SG)-Q

'What have you bought out of these – liver, heart, lungs?' [E]

### 3. Morphosyntax of “indefinite sub-set constructions”

# Pechora Komi-Zyrian: quantifier marking

- N + N

**ət'ik mužykšu-ə**                      məd-ys-ly                      dozmar                      leb-ž'-ə.  
one man say-PRS.3SG other-P.3(SG)-DAT wood.grouse fly-SMLF-PRS.3SG  
(There were three men in the boat.) 'One man tells to another one: «There is a wood grouse flying.»' [C]

- N + N-poss

i              veš'ig                      ət'i              č'oj-əj                      vošt-i-s                      kəmkət-sə.  
and at.all                      one sister-P.1SG loose-PRT-3(SG) shoes-ACC.P.3(SG)  
(We went to the field with my sisters, then we saw wild horse, were afraid and flew away.) 'And even one of the sisters lost her shoes.' [C]

- The word order is rigid in both cases.

- If the nominal head is not expressed, the possessive marker is obligatory:

korzina-yn		kujl-i-s-ny		jablok-jas,		me
basket-INESS		lie-PST-3-PL		apple-PL		I
<b>ət'ik-sə</b>	/	<b>*ət'ik</b>		š'əj-i.		
one-ACC.P.3(SG)		one		eat-PST(1SG)		

'There were apples in the basket, I ate one of them.' [E]

# Why 3SG?

- The possessive can be 3SG, even in contexts where the possessor is the speaker/hearer:

una                    kn'iga-sə                    e-n                    boš't.

many                    book-ACC.P.3(SG) NEG-2                    take

[The boy is borrowing some books from the speaker.] Don't take many books, (you won't manage to read them). [E] (repeated)

- The basic explanation: the 3SG is the default marker.

# Alternative explanation

- I hypothesize that the 3SG POSS in similar examples refers to the set, “many books from the abovementioned set of books”. The set is 3SG, thus, this particular form is used.
- In case the nominal head is not expressed, the POSS is also 3SG for the same reason (the only attested possibility for Pechora Komi-Zyrian).

# Beserman Udmurt

- The syntax of the NP is much more complicated.
- First, POSS are not obligatory in case of absence of the head noun:

ma	<b>ted'â</b>	gine	ju-i-m.
PTCL	white	only	drink-PST-1PL

(Alcohol is being discussed.) 'Well, we only drink the white one.' [C]



# Usacheva, Arkhangelskiy (2016 and other works)

- Both the noun and the modifier can take the POSS
- The noun and the modifier can change places or be separated by elements not belonging to the NP, e.g. the verb:

tin' mon nâl-me zæk-se š'ot-i, o-t'  
here I daughter-ACC.P.1(SG) big-ACC.P.3(SG) give-PST(1SG) that-PROL  
ž'ankino-e š'ot-i, nâl-me.  
Ziankino-ILL daughter-PST(1SG) daughter-ACC.P.1(SG)

'I gave my elder daughter in marriage, I have her to Ziankino, my daughter.' [C]

**gord-ez=na** val **vin-ez.**  
red-P.3(SG)-yet be.PST wine-P.3(SG)

'There was also RED wine.' [K]

- [Arkhangelskiy, Usacheva 2016]: these constructions contain two NPs, which explains the presence of two POSS and the possibility of word order change and verb insertion.
- This happens if the head and the modifier belongs to different components of information structure (IS):

*I gave my daughter... the elder one in marriage...*

*the red one we also drink, the wine.*

A. QUANT-POSS + n-POSS

odig-**êz**                      nêl-**ê**                      ‘one of my daughters’ [C]

one-P.3(SG)                      girl-P.1SG

B. QUANT + N-POSS

odig                      mad’-**ed**                      ‘one of your songs’ [C]

one                      song-P.2(SG)

C. QUANT-POSS + N

odig-**êz**                      gord    kureg                      ‘one of the red hens’ [C]

one-P.3(SG)    red    hen

– not frequent in the corpus; unacceptable for NPs with modifiers

D. QUANT + N

odig    nêl                      ‘one of the girls (who came from Moscow)’ [C]

one    girl

# NPs with quantifiers

- With quantifiers, the two POSS structure can also be used in case of contrast, different components of the IS. However, it is not the necessary condition.

tat'	ten'=n'i	<b>petuk-te</b>	<b>odig-ze</b>
this-PROL	here-already	rooster-ACC.P.2(SG)	one-ACC.P.3(SG)
asmes	pun-i-m=n'i,	tak	ved'?
REFL.1PL	put-PST-1PL-already	so	PTCL

'Then we have put one of the roosters here ourselves, haven't we?' [C]

- The example is taken from the experiment with cards; the cards only included one rooster. Thus, it cannot be hypothesized that *odig* 'one' here serves to identify one of the set. The whole group belongs to the sentence background, as the intensifier is focused.
- Thus, unlike with modifiers, possessives on quantifiers may occur even if the quantifier and the noun belong to one and the same component of the information structure.

# Udmurt: person, number of the possessive

a.      mon    šor-em                      n'an'-ez      š'i-i,                      muket-**se**  
          I        cut.bread-NZR        bread-ACC    eat-PST(1SG)        other-  
ACC.P.3(SG)  
n'an'-ze    /        n'an'-me                      kušt-i                      pânâ-lâ.  
bread-ACC.P.3(SG) bread-ACC.P.1(SG) throw-PST(1SG)    dog-DAT

b.      \*...muket-**me**                      n'an'-me...  
          other-ACC.P.1(SG)              bread-ACC.P.1(SG)

a.=b. 'I ate one piece of bread, and threw another one to the dog.' [E]

# Explanation

- The 3SG possessive does not refer to the actual possessor, but to the set.

the set of ‘my daughters’

the possessor (= the speaker)



odig-êz

nêl-ê

one-P.3SG

daughter-P.1SG

‘one of my daughters’, lit. ‘one my daughter’ [C]

# What is the head?

- In Russian, the head is the quantifier: according to the criterium of morphosyntactic locus [Zwicky 1985; Тестелец 2001: 84–86]:

увидел одну из девушек, ушел с одной из девушек

- By contrast, in Beserman Udmurt the head is, obviously, the noun:

...kwin'            č'in'â-**de**                            gine    č'oš                            vož'.

three                finger-ACC.P.2(SG)    only    together                hold.IM P.SG

'As you are drawing don't hold your pencil with your fist, just hold it with three fingers.' [E]

kâk            vojna-**ez**    až'-i-z.

two            war-ACC    see-PST-3(SG)

'[He] survived (lit. saw) two wars.' [C]

- Thus, the head of the constructions with quantifiers is the noun.



## 4. Conclusions

- The Permic possessive markers do not exhibit exhaustivity, which is a property of articles and possessive pronouns in English, French and other languages [Simonenko 2017; Simonenko in press]. This is why they can denote an indefinite part of a definite mass or an indefinite subset of a definite set (e.g., *there were some stones in the barrel, and he took **a stone***). Therefore, it is incorrect to characterize them in terms of definiteness, rather as “referential anchors”.
- Komi-Zyrian: In constructions with numerals, quantifiers and pronouns the noun is a head. It can take the 3SG.POSS even if the possessor is the speaker/hearer. My explanation is that the POSS refers to the set.
- Udmurt: There are two types of constructions with numerals and quantifiers: 1) headed by the noun; 2) with two NPs and the POSS on the quantifier/numeral. In the latter case, the POSS on the quantifier refers to the set, and the POSS on the noun refers to the possessor.

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