



Possessive agreement in Meadow Mari, Komi-Permyak, and Udmurt

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Background

- adnominal possessive phrases (PNP) show broad structural variation in Finno-Ugric languages (cf. Havas 2007, Honti 2007, Havas et al. 2015)
- in Komi-Permyak, Udmurt, and Meadow Mari double marking is allowed for PNP

(1) Meadow Mari

Olga-**n** tetrad'-(**že**)
Olga-GEN notebook-3SG
'Olga's notebook'

(2) Udmurt

Yura-**len** ki-?(**yz**)
Yuri-GEN hand-(3SG)
'Yuri's hand'

(3) Komi-Permyak

Nasta-**lön** nébög(-**ys**)
Nastya-GEN book-3SG
'Nastya's book'

- Under what circumstances the possessive suffix (Px) can be omitted?
- What can be the source of the microvariation attested in the target languages?

Languages

- all the languages spoken in European Russia
- Meadow Mari (formerly Cheremis; Mari < Finno-Ugric < Uralic)
 - ca. 482,000 speakers
 - Russian and Turkic influence
- Udmurt (formerly Votyak; Permian < Finno-Ugric < Uralic)
 - ca. 340,000 speakers
 - Russian and Turkic influence
- Komi-Permyak (Permian < Finno-Ugric < Uralic)
 - ca. 61,000 speakers
 - Russian influence (Perepis 2010; Ethnologue 2015)
- close genealogical relatedness between KP and U
- close areal relatedness for U and MM (Bereczki 2002)

Data and methods

- elicitation
 - native language experts
 - unified questionnaires for testing semantic and pragmatic questions
 - additional syntactic tests for Komi-Permyak
- corpus analysis
 - Wikipedia translations (and online journals) by Giellatekno (Korp)
 - ~50 clauses for Udmurt
 - ~100 clauses for Komi-Permyak
 - ~300 clauses for Meadow Mari
 - blog texts
 - ~300 clauses for Udmurt

Difficulties: internal vs. external possession

- In external possessive constructions a semantic possessor-possessee relation is expressed by coding the possessor as a core grammatical relation of the verb and in a constituent separate from that which contains the possessee (Payne & Barshi 1999: 3)
- How to distinguish external possessive constructions from internal ones in these languages?
- We excluded unambiguously external possessive constructions:
 - predicative possession
 - postponed possessors

Canonical differential possessor marking in Permic

- if they are direct objects in a clause, Udmurt (4) and Komi-Permyak (5) PNP has different marking both on the possessor and the head:

(4) Udmurt

Kolhoz-leś muzjem-ze arenda-je bašt-i-my.

kolkhoz-ABL land-ACC.3SG rent-ILL take-PST-1PL

‘We rented the land of the kolkhoz.’

(5) Komi-Permyak

Me töd-i Petra-liś von-sö.

1SG know-PST Peter-ABL brother-ACC.3SG

‘I knew Peter’s brother.’

- this phenomenon is well-documented and assumed to be of Turkic origin (e. g. Rédei 1978, Csúcs 1990, Bartens 2000, Bereczki 2002)

Previous findings on PNP-s of the target languages

Meadow Mari:

- with nominal possessors, the omission of the Px is **optional** (1) (Beke 1911)
- with pronominal possessors, the Px can only be omitted in 1. and 2. person (6)
 - this correlates with the situation found in the neighboring Turkic languages (Bereczki 2002)
- in some sources, it is claimed that possessive agreement is not obligatory in 3rd person with pronominal possessors (Riese et al. 2017)

(6) Meadow Mari (Bereczki 1990: 42)

məj-ən šergaš šörtnən.

1SG-GEN ring silver

‘My ring is silver.’

Previous findings on PNP-s in the target languages

Udmurt:

- the possessive suffix can **sometimes** be omitted if the possessee is inalienable (Vakhrushov 1970)
- the omission of possessive suffixes is **only possible in external possessive structures** (Edygarova 2010)
 - BUT: some of her examples are controversial

(7) Udmurt (Edygarova 2010: 267)

syće ińi mynam śam.

such PTCL 1SG.GEN character

‘Such is my character.’

Previous findings on PNP-s in the target languages

Komi-Permyak:

- nominal possessors are marked by the genitive, while possessives are **usually** unmarked (Ponomareva 2010)
- in pronominal possessive constructions, either the possessor or the Px can be omitted in all persons (8) (ibid.)
- no possessive agreement with definite, genitive marked possessors (Bartens 2000)
- the lack of possessive agreement is **usual but not obligatory** (Batalova 1975, Rédei 1978)

(8) Komi-Permyak

Sylön kerku-(ys) löz röm-a.
3SG.GEN house-3SG blue colour-ADJ
'His/Her house is blue.'

Structure of possessive phrases

- Meadow Mari:
 - possessor-Gen + possessee-Px
 - possessor-Gen + possessee-∅ (rare)
 - possessee without possessor
- Udmurt:
 - possessor-Gen + possessee-Px
 - possessor-Abl + possessee-Px.Acc
 - possessor-Gen + possessee-∅ (extremely rare)
 - possessee without possessor
- Komi-Permyak:
 - possessor-Gen + possessee-Px (rare)
 - possessor-Abl + possessee-Px.Acc
 - possessor-Gen + possessee-∅
 - possessee without possessor

Examined properties

- **lexical properties** of the possessor
- **semantic properties** of the possessee (alienability, animacy, abstractness)
- syntactic function of the possessee
- pragmatic properties of the possessee

Inalienable possession: body parts

- In Meadow Mari, the omission of Px was marginal in the corpus and usually was not supported by informants' judgements

(9) Meadow Mari (Alhoniemi 1985: 49)

Sakar-yn kid-yšte šergakan luj.

Sakar-GEN hand-INE expensive marten.

'In Sakar's hand there's an expensive marten.'

(10) Meadow Mari

Tyj-yn tup-(ed)-ym už-ym.

2SG-GEN back-2SG-ACC see-PST1.1SG

'I saw your back.'

Inalienable possession: body parts

- the omission of Px with body part nouns tends to be less ungrammatical than in other semantic categories in Udmurt

(11) Udmurt (Vakhrushov 1970: 101)

Lina-len ben peľ-jos kyly-ny daś.

Lina-GEN PTCL ear-PL hear-INF ready

‘Lina’s ears are ready to hear.’

(12) Udmurt (udmurt4ka.blogspot.ru)

mynam nyr özhytak oshis’k-iz uk.

1SG.GEN nose bit hang-PST.3SG PTCL

‘I started to feel a bit upset.’

Inalienable possession: body parts

- In Komi-Permyak, informants considered Px omission in the case of body part nouns questionable but not ungrammatical

(13) Komi-Permyak

Nasta-lön jur viś-ö.

Nastya-GEN head hurt-3SG

‘Nastya has a headache.’

(14) Komi-Permyak

Menam ?jur/jur-ö bergal-ö.

1SG.GEN head/head-1SG turn-3SG

‘I feel dizzy.’

Inalienable possession: kinship terms

- Px omission only allowed with pronominal possessors

(15) Meadow Mari (Korp)

Majruk-yn ava-že, Saskavij, tüška vol'yk-ym onč-a.

Mayruk-GEN mother-3SG Saskaviy, group cattle-ACC watch-3SG.

'Mayruk's mother, Saskaviy, watches over the cattle herd.'

(16) Meadow Mari (Korp)

A myj-yn tol-me-m-ym vuč-en tyj-yn ješ.

but 1SG-GEN come-PTCP.PASS-1SG-ACC wait-PST2.3SG 2SG-GEN family

'But it's my arrival that your family was awaiting.'

Inalienable possession: kinship terms

- Px omission is not allowed; only one questionable counterexample from the informants

(17) Udmurt

?Fjodor-len pi udmurt kyl-yn veras'k-e.
Fjodor-GEN son Udmurt language-INE speak-3SG
'Fjodor's son speaks Udmurt.'

(18) Udmurt

*Mynam nylpi – dyšetis.
1SG.GEN child teacher
'My child is a teacher.'

Inalienable possession: kinship terms

- the use of the Px is entirely optional

(19) Komi-Permyak

Nasta-lön mam-(ys) mun-ö magazin-ö.

Nastya-GEN mother-3SG go-PRS.3SG shop-ILL

‘Nastya’s mother goes to the shop.’

(20) Komi-Permyak

Menam mam-(ö) öd’dön basök.

1SG.GEN mother very nice

‘My mother is very nice.’

Inalienable possession: abstract possessee

- Only examples with pronominal possessors were found in the data set

(21) Meadow Mari (Korp)

Teve uzh-at **myj-yn** ilyš tugaj saj lij-eš, jen-wlak
here see-2SG 1SG-GEN life so good be-3SG person-PL
onč-en köran-aš tüŋal-yt.
watch-CVB envy-INF start-3PL

‘Here, you’ll see my life will be so good, people will get envious seeing it.’

Inalienable possession: abstract possessee

(22) Udmurt (Vakhrushov 1970: 101)

Vaša-len uzh-jos umoj myn-o.

Vasya-GEN thing-PL well go-3pl

‘Vasya’s things go well.’

(23) Udmurt (udmurt4ka.blogspot.ru)

So mynam osojoj ritual kyće=ke.

that 1SG.GEN special ritual some_kind_of

‘That’s my special ritual, or what.’

Inalienable possession: abstract possessee

- Px omission is possible (24) but informants tend to avoid it (25)

(24) Komi-Permyak

Talun Nasta-lön nastroińńo bur.

today Nastyá-GEN mood good

‘Nastyá is in a good mood today.’

(25) Kyčöm tenat ńim-*(yt)?

how 2SG.GEN name-2SG

‘What’s your name?’

Alienable possession: inanimate possessee

- Examples only with pronominal possessors

(26) Meadow Mari (Bereczki 1990: 42)

Myj-yn šergaš šörtnyn.

1SG-GEN ring gold

‘My ring is golden.’

- for Udmurt: no examples in the corpus

Alienable possession: inanimate possessee

(27) Komi-Permyak

Nasta-lön n'ebög(-ys) kujl-ö pyzan vylyn.

Nastya-GEN book-3SG lay-3SG table on

'Nastya's book is on the table.'

(28) Komi-Permyak

Menam ćuńkyć-(ö) zarn'i-iś ker-öm.

1SG.GEN ring-1SG gold-ABL make-PTCP.PST

'My ring is made of gold.'

PNP constructions without Px in Udmurt

(Korp + blogs + previous literature)

Possessee → Possessor ↓		inalienable					alienable		
		body part	other part-whole	kinship term	other animate	abstract	other inanimate	animate, -human	inanimate
animate	Pron	✓			✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓		
	PropN	✓✓			✓	✓✓			
	+human	✓				✓✓			
	-human								
inanimate	concrete		✓		✓✓	✓			
	abstract		✓		✓	✓			

PNP constructions without Px in Komi-Permyak (Korp + elicited data)

Possessee → Possessor ↓		inalienable					alienable		
		body part	other part-whole	kinship term	other animate	abstract	other inanimate	animate, -human	inanimate
animate	Pron	✓		✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓
	PropN	✓		✓✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓
	+human	✓		✓✓✓		✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓
inanimate	-human			✓✓					
	concrete				✓✓				
	abstract					✓			

Further research

(29) Komi-Permyak

Context: Myj eta? 'What's this?'

Eta Nasta-lön nébög/*nébög-ys.

DEM Nastya-GEN book/book-3SG

'This is Nastya's book.'

→ Is this restriction due to:

- information structure (focused PNP) or
- syntactic function (the PNP is a nominal predicate)?

Conclusion

- according to semantic properties, we found that body part nouns function differently as compared to other categories:
 - in Meadow Mari and Komi-Permyak, the omission of the Px was rare/restricted
 - in Udmurt, the omission seems to be less problematic
- the omission of Px is terms of frequency and grammaticality:
 - (30) Komi-Permyak > Meadow Mari > Udmurt
- genealogical relatedness seems to be less important according to the microvariation found in these languages
 - due to language contact: Russian in KP and Turkic in other languages?

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