Diagnosing and Distinguishing Northern Khanty POSS.2SG Unpossessives

Stepan Mikhailov, stepanmihajlov@gmail.com

Laboratory of Formal Models in Linguistics, HSE University, Moscow

In most Uralic languages (Nikolaeva 2003; Kuznetsova 2003; Simonenko 2017; É. Kiss, Tánczos 2018 and references therein) possessive agreement markers can appear outside prototypical possessive contexts.

The Kazym dialect of Northern Khanty[1] is particularly interesting in this regard as what looks like the POSS.2SG marker *-en*, besides figuring in **proper possessive** contexts (1), also appears with unique objects in commands (2), with highly topical entities (3), and with referential human names (4) (cf. the lack of 'your' in translations).

(1) **(năŋ)** **kăt´-en** moś-λ

you.SG cat-POSS.2SG purr-NPST[3SG]

'Your cat purrs'.

(2) was'a, **(#năŋ)** **m'ačok-en** mij-e

V. you.SG ball-POSS.2SG give-IMP.SG.SG

{The child picked up a dirty ball from the ground. His parent says:} 'Vasya, give me the ball'.

(3) **(#năŋ) amp-en** ma pελ-am-a χurət-ti pit-əs

your dog-POSS.2SG I at-POSS.1SG-DAT bark-NFIN.NPST become-PST[3SG]

'{I was walking along the street when I saw a dog.} The dog started barking at me'.

(4) **(#năŋ) wɵntər-en** sewr-əs tʉt_jʉχ

you A.-POSS.2SG cleave-PST[3SG] fire_wood

'Andrej cleaved a log'.

The main thesis of this talk is that **the latter three uses**, in fact, **represent markers that are synchronically independent from the proper possessive** *-en* [POSS.2SG]. Since they look like possessive markers but, as I will argue, are not in fact such, I refer to them as unpossessive markers — or **unpossessives** for short.

The aims of the talk are to **diagnose** (2-4) as **unpossessive markers** and to **mutually distinguish them**. The argument is based on differences in morphosyntactic

---

[1] The data for this talk come from my fieldwork with speakers of the Kazym dialect residing in Kazym village (Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Region, Russian Federation), during fieldtrips in 2018, 2019, and 2021.

and semantic properties, two of which are briefly discussed below with four more properties to be discussed in the talk.

The main differences between the proper possessive marker and the unpossessives is that only the former admits **explicit NP-internal possessors** (1), while the latter three do not. Adding an explicit possessor to (2-4) results in a proper possessive reading of the markers.

The particularly challenging problem is distinguishing (3) and (4) which are very similar overall but crucially differ in their co-variation properties: only **the topic marker** (3) **may scope under a quantifier and co-vary with it** (5), while **the proprial article** (4) cannot and **must retain constant reference** (6).

(5) kašəŋ śos amp šiwaλə-t-ɛm-ən
     every hour dog see-NFIN.NPST-1SG-LOC

     amp-en   ma pɛλ-am-a χurət-λ
     dog-POSS.2SG I at-POSS.1SG-DAT bark-NPST[3SG]

     'Every time I meet a dog the dog barks at me. {Sometimes it is a big dog, sometimes it is a smaller dog.}'

(6) kašəŋ oλ mojλəpsi wɥjλ´ **was´a /** **#was´aj-en**
     every year present take[NPST.3SG] V. / V.-POSS.2SG

     '{Every year we give a present to the 4th year student who gets the best grades.} Every year the present is taken by a Vasya. {Last year it was Vasya Tas'manow and this year it's Vasya Tarlin}'.

References: É. Kiss K. **& Tánczos** O. (**2018**) From possessor agreement to object marking in the evolution of the Udmurt-jez suffix: A grammaticalization approach to morpheme syncretism. In: Language, 94(4). P. 733-757; **Kuznetsova** A. I. (**2003**) Kumulyatsiya grammaticheskikh znachenii v agglyutina-tivnykh pokazatelyakh: deikticheskie funktsii posessiva v ural'skikh yazykakh [Cumulation of grammatical meanings in agglutinating morphemes: deictic functions of the possessive in Uralic]. Mezhdunarodnyi simpozium po deik-ticheskim sistemam i kvantifika-tsii v yazykakh Evropy i Severnoi i Tsen-tral'noi Azii. Sbornik statei. Izhevsk. P. 249-259; **Nikolaeva**, I. (**2003**). Possessive affixes in the pragmatic structuring of the utterance: Evidence from Uralic. In: International Symposium on Deictic Systems and Quantification in Languages Spoken in Europe and North and Central Asia: Collection of papers (pp. 130-145);

Simonenko, A. (**2017**). Towards a semantic typology of specific determiners. In: 21st Amsterdam Colloquium (pp. 425-434).