

The syntax of belonging: cross-linguistic variation within Uralic

Barbara Egedi & Ekaterina Georgieva & Veronika Hegedűs & Nikolett Mus

Research Institute for Linguistics
Hungarian Academy of Sciences

3rd Syntax of Uralic Languages
Tartu June 18–19 2019

Nominal Structures of Uralic Languages (NSUL)

- Run time: 2017–2021
- Research Institute for Linguistics, Hungarian Academy of Sciences
- Research topic: the structure of noun phrases, nominal sentences/copular constructions in Uralic languages

Belong-construction: semantic definition

- Predication about: whom a discourse-given entity belongs to.

(1) The book is John's/yours.

- This is to be distinguished from HAVE-possessive predication.

(2) John has a book. / You have a book.

Belong-construction: terminological mismatches

Treated as a subtype of predicative possession:

- *belong-construction*, as opposed to *have-construction* (Heine 1997)
- definite predicative possession, as opposed to indefinite (Stassen 2009)
- predicative possessive construction, as opposed to existential possessive construction (Simonenko forthc.)

Listed as a separate type (of non-verbal predication):

- genitive predicates, listed among minor clause types with nonverbal predicates (Dryer 2007)
- possessor predication / possessor predicative construction (Typological Database of the Ugric Languages)

Belong-construction: syntax

The belong-construction is a type of copular clause.

- The subject, which is notionally the possessee, is referential/definite/topical
- The predicate shows (at least) two patterns: nominal and locative

(3) [DP]_S [cop DP]_{Pred} (English: *The book is mine.*)

(4) [DP]_S [cop PP]_{Pred} (French: *Le livre est à moi.*)

- Such sentences behave like copular clauses in the languages we examine, as well.
- Hungarian and Tundra Nenets belong-constructions involve nominal predicates.
- The corresponding Udmurt constructions are rather to be analyzed as locative clauses.

Belong-construction in Udmurt

- Belong-construction: PRED = genitive-marked possessor

(5) Ta kńiga Ivan-len / tjad.
this book Ivan-GEN / you.GEN
'This book is Ivan's /yours.'

- Adnominal possessors are also genitive-marked

(6) a. Ivan-len kńiga-jez b. tjad kńiga-jed
Ivan-GEN book-3SG 2SG.GEN book-2SG
'Ivan's book' 'your book'

- NOTE: there is an alternative strategy

(7) Ta kńiga Ivan-len kńiga-jez / tjad kńiga-jed.
this book Ivan-GEN book-3SG / you.GEN book-2SG
'This book is Ivan's book / your book.'

Belong-construction in Hungarian

- Belong-construction: PRED is marked with -é:

(8) Ez a könyv Iván-é / a ti-é-d.
this the book Ivan-É / the 2SG-É-2SG
'This book is Ivan's / yours.'

- Adnominal possessors are unmarked or dative-marked.

(9) a. Iván(-nak a) könyv-e b. a te könyv-e-d
Ivan(-DAT the) book-POSS the 2SG book-POSS-2SG
'Ivan's book' 'your book'

- NOTE: there is an alternative strategy

(10) Ez a könyv Iván könyv-e / a te könyv-e-d.
this the book Ivan book-POSS / the 2SG book-POSS-2SG
'This book is Ivan's book / your book.'

Belong-construction in Tundra Nenets

- Belong-construction: PRED = full possessive construction

(11) ńuku weńeko ŋáćeki-ʔ weńeko / pidar weńeko-r.
 this dog child-GEN dog.3SG / 2SG dog-POSS.2SG
 ‘This dog is the child’s /yours.’

- Adnominal possessors bear the genitive/nominative case

(12) a. ŋáćeki-ʔ weńeko(-da) b. pidar weńeko-r
 child-GEN dog-(POSS.3SG) 2SG dog-POSS.2SG
 ‘the child’s dog’ ‘your dog’

↪ This dog is the child’s = This dog is the child’s dog.

The structure of the copular clause

Belong constructions as copular clauses

- Q: What are the patterns of copula use and subject–predicate agreement in the belong-construction?
- Our claims in a nutshell
 - Tundra Nenets: nominal predicates
 - Hungarian: nominal predicates
 - Udmurt: nominal/PP predicates

COP & AGR in Tundra Nenets

- Belong-construction: person/number Agr (with lexical possessors)

(13) weńeko-ʔ xasawa-ʔ weńeko-ʔ.
dog-PL man-GEN dog-3PL
'The dogs are the man's.'

- Copular clauses with nominal predicates: person/number agreement

(14) weńeko-ʔ ŋarka-ʔ.
dog-PL big-3PL
'The dogs are big.'

- PP/adverbial predicates do not agree; copula is obligatory

(15) weńeko-ʔ má-kana ŋa-ʔ.
dog-PL tent-LOC be-3PL
'The dogs are in the tent.'

- Nominal/adjectival predicates require a copula under certain conditions, e.g. in future, and so does the belong-construction.

(16) Waña lékar? ηæ-ηku.
John doctor be-FUT.3SG
'John will be a doctor.'

(17) tuku padar? Waña-? padar? ηæ-ηku.
this book John-GEN book.3SG be-FUT.3SG
'This book will be John's.'

COP & AGR in Tundra Nenets (cont.)

- With pronominal possessors in PRED, the possessee agrees with the possessor in person and number:

(18) t'uku kńiga pidar kńiga-r.
this book 2SG book-POSS.2SG
'This book is yours.'

- There is no subject-predicate agreement.
- Thus, the Agr patterns in belong-constructions are as follows:

	V _x	P _x
Lexical possessors	✓	✗
Pronominal possessors	✗	✓

- Variation with lexical possessors: possessive agreement is also possible

(19) t'uku weńeko ŋaćeeki-ʔ weńeko-da.
this dog child-GEN dog-POSS.3SG
'This dog is the child's.'

- Question for further research: possible semantic differences between the two strategies

COP & AGR in Hungarian

- Belong-construction: number agreement, no copula

(20) Ezek a könyv-ek Iván-é-i.
this-PL the book-PL Ivan-É-PL
'These book are Ivan's.'

- Copular clauses with a nominal predicate: number agr, no copula

(21) Ez-ek a könyv-ek poros-ak.
this-PL the book-PL dusty-PL
'These books are dusty.'

- PP/adverbial predicates: copula is obligatory, no agreement on the PP

(22) Ez-ek a könyv-ek a polc-on van-nak.
this-PL the book-PL the shelf-SUP be-3PL
'These books are on the shelf.'

- Nominal (adjectival) predicates require a copula under certain conditions, e.g. in future, and so does the belong-construction.

(23) Ez-ek a könyv-ek poros-ak lesz-nek.
this-PL the book-PL dusty-PL will.be-3PL
'These books will be dusty.'

(24) Ez-ek a könyv-ek Iván-é-i lesz-nek.
this-PL the book-PL Ivan-É-PL will.be-3PL
'These books will be Ivan's.'

The suffix -é in Hungarian

- The suffix -é is argued to be a genitive case marker; the possessee is a covert pronoun (cf. Bartos 2001; Dékány 2015)

(25) Ezek a könyv-ek Iván-é-i.
these the book-PL Ivan-É-PL
'These book are Ivan's.'

- The same plural marker is also used in possessive constructions (26-b)
→ there is a covert possessee in belong-constructions

(26) a. könyv-ek b. Iván könyv-e-i
book-PL Ivan book-POSS-PL
'books' 'Ivan's books'

Anaphoric possessive constructions in Hungarian

- (27) Leporoltam Igor **könyv-e-i-t** és
off.dust-PST-1SG Igor book-POSS-PL-ACC and
Iván-é-*pro*-i-t is.
Ivan-É-*pro*-PL-ACC also
'I dusted off Igor's books and Ivan's as well.'
- (28) Leporoltam az én **könyv-e-i-m-et** és
off.dust-PST-1SG the 1SG book-POSS-PL-1SG-ACC and
a ti-é-*pro*-i-d-et is.
the you-É-*pro*-PL-2SG-ACC also
'I dusted off my books and yours as well.'

- In anaphoric possessive constructions, N+Poss is substituted by *pro*

- Belong-construction: no agreement with the subject, no copula

(29) Ta kńiga-os Ivan-len.
this book-PL Ivan-GEN
'These books are Ivan's.'

- Copular clauses with nominal predicates: number agreement, no copula

(30) Kńiga-os tunsjiko-eś.
book-PL interesting-PL
'The books are interesting.'

- PP/adverbial predicates: no copula, no agreement on the PP

(31) Kńiga-os džek viľin.
book-PL table on
'The books are on the table.'

- Possessors in the belong-construction cannot be marked for Number:

(32) Ta kńiga-os Ivan-len-(*jos).
this book-PL Ivan-GEN-PL
'These books are Ivan's.'

↪ Similarly to PP predicates and unlike nominal predicates

- Q: Why is an ellipsis analysis implausible?

(33) [NP-gen [NP-poss]]

- In argument position, number marking is possible and the 3sg possessive suffix signals that the possessee has been elided:

(34) Ivan-len-jos-iz / tɨnad-jos-iz džək vɨlɨn.
Ivan-GEN-PL-3SG / you.GEN-PL-3SG table on
'Ivan's / yours are on the table.'

cf. Alatyrev (1983); Winkler (2001); É.Kiss & Tánčzos (2018), a.o.

Nominal ellipsis in Udmurt (cont.)

- Structure of adnominal possession (cf. Simonenko & Leontjev 2012):

(35) [KP [PossP [NumP [NP]]]]

- In cases of nominal ellipsis, the possessee is elided, but NumP is present → NP-ellipsis

(36) [KP [PossP [NumP [~~NP~~]]]]

Note: The use of the 3sg possessive suffix in NP-ellipsis requires more explanation (see Georgieva 2019)

- In the belong-construction, on the other hand, no number marking is found
 - Instance of NumP-ellipsis? (see Saab 2018 a.o.)
 - Belong-construction as a PP?

Belong-construction in Udmurt: PP analysis

- Diachronic evidence: the genitive case *-len* goes back to a locative case (cf. Bartens 2000: 82, Csúcs 2005: 177–178)
- Furthermore, synchronically the genitive forms of 1/2 person pronouns contain a locative case:

(37)	a.	t ₁ n-a-d	b.	gurt-a-d
		you-INE/ILL-2SG		village-INE/ILL-2SG
		'you.gen' <i>not</i> 'in you'		'in your village'

- The locative nature of the Udmurt genitive case is still preserved in the belong-construction:
 - ↪ The book is Ivan's ~ at Ivan.
 - ↪ Absence of copula and of plural marking falls out naturally
 - ↪ Not a case of nominal ellipsis since there is no possessee

Belong-construction in Udmurt: a new strategy?

- New observation: when a strong contrast is involved (i.e. the subject is possibly a contrastive topic), some speakers allow for the anaphoric possessive construction (with NP-ellipsis) to be used instead of the PP-like belong-construction

(38) Taiz minam-ez.
this.one 1SG.GEN-3SG
'This one is mine.' (as opposed to that one)

(39) Ta kníga-os Maša-len-jos-iz.
this book-PL Masha-GEN-PL-3SG
'These books are Masha's.' (as opposed to those ones)

Summary

- Tundra Nenets belong-constructions are copular clauses with a nominal predicate:
 - The possessee must be overt within PRED.
 - Subject–predicate agreement is overridden by obligatory possessive agreement within PRED when the possessor is pronominal.
- Hungarian belong-constructions are copular clauses with a nominal predicate:
 - The possessee is a covert pronoun within PRED.
- Udmurt belong-constructions are copular clauses with a PP predicate:
 - Belong-constructions either follow a PP-pattern or switch to the NP-ellipsis strategy under certain conditions, which is also found in argument position

Summary (cont.)

The choice of pattern in the belong-construction can be attributed to differences wrt:

- The possibility of head noun omission
- The nature of the possessor's case marker
- The possibility of no subject–predicate agreement

Thank you for your attention!

We are indebted to the native speakers: Khadry Okotetto, Ekaterina Suntsova and Yulia Speshilova.

The support of the research project “Nominal Structures in Uralic Languages” (NKFI 125206) is gratefully acknowledged.

Selected references

- Bartens, R. 2000. Permiläisten kielten rakenne ja kehitys. Helsinki: SUS 238.
- Bartos, H. 2001. Mutató névmási módosítók a magyarban: egyezés vagy osztozás? In M. Bakró-Nagy, Z. Bánréti & K. É.Kiss (eds.), Újabb tanulmányok a strukturális magyar nyelvtan és a nyelvtörténet köréből, 19–41. Budapest: Osiris.
- Dékány, É. 2015. The syntax of anaphoric possessives in Hungarian. *NLLT* 33(4): 1121–1168.
- Dryer, M. S. 2007. Clause types. In T. Shopen (ed.), *Language Typology and Syntactic Description*. vol. 1: Clause Structure. 2nd edn., 224–275. Cambridge: CUP.
- É.Kiss, K. & O. Tánczos. 2018. From possessor agreement to object marking in the evolution of the Udmurt -jez suffix: A grammaticalization approach to morpheme syncretism. *Language* 94(4): 733–757.
- Heine, B. 1997. Possession. *Cognitive Forces, Sources and Grammaticalization*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Simonenko, A. (forthcoming) Existential possession in Meadow Mari. In G. Dalmi, J. Witkos & P. Ceglowski (eds.), *Approaches to Predicative Possession. The View from Slavic and Finno-Ugric*. New York: Bloomsbury.
- Stassen, L. 2009. *Predicative possession*. Oxford: OUP.
- Winkler, E. 2001. *Udmurt*. München & Newcastle: Lincom Europa.