

SOUL 2017, Gerson Klumpp

Givenness features: between zero expression and definite encoding of NPs (based on Komi)

Abstract: Linguistic expressions in discourse which have the informational structural status *given* may contain a *givenness feature* as defined by Krifka (2007: 37): “A feature X of an expression α is a Givenness feature if X indicates whether the denotation of α is present in the Common Ground or not, and/or indicates the degree to which it is present in the immediate Common Ground”. Depending on the exact understanding of the notion of givenness—topicality, saliency, identifiability, pragmatic definiteness, or others—, such a givenness feature may consist in zero-expression, deaccenting, pronominal expression, or equipping an NP with a givenness marker in form of a demonstrative pronoun, a definite article, a possessive pronoun or a possessive suffix. For possessive suffixes, it has been observed that the use of a subset of them (3rd, 2nd person singular) corresponds to the direct anaphoric, immediate situation, or larger situation use of definite articles (Fraurud 2001, Gerland 2014 among many others), relativized by the important observation that differently from definite articles in e.g. English, German, or Hungarian, the use of the non-possessive possessive suffix is not fully grammaticalized and not obligatory (Nikolaeva 2003: 135). However, if the possessive suffix is involved in object marking as in Komi, its non-application may lead to ungrammaticality (e.g. Serdobol’skaya & Toldova 2016). On the other hand, topicality triggered deaccenting may override identifiability triggered object marking (Klumpp 2014).

The present talk aims at understanding the application of givenness features in Komi, with emphasis on the possessive suffix. The analyzed data comes from a picture task with 50 contemporary speakers of Komi, who behave differently in terms of “referential density” (actually a label for different languages, cf. Bickel 2003). The results are discussed in respect to other Finno-Ugric languages, framed by considerations on the use of terms like *given* and *definite* with non-article languages.

Bickel, Balthasar 2003. Referential density in discourse and syntactic typology. *Language* 79, 708–736.

Fraurud, Kari 2001. Possessives with extensive use. A source of definite articles? In Baron, Irène & Herslund, Michael & Sørensen, Finn (eds.). *Dimensions of possession*. Amsterdam: Benjamins, 243–267.

Gerland, Doris 2014. Definitely not possessed? Possessive suffixes with definiteness marking function. In: Gamerschlag, Thomas & Gerland, Doris & Osswald, Rainer & Petersen, Wiebke (eds.). *Frames and concept types. Applications in language and philosophy*. Studies in linguistics and philosophy 94. Cham & Heidelberg: Springer, 269–292.

Klumpp, Gerson 2014. Identifiability, Givenness and Zero-marked Referential Objects in Komi. In: *Linguistics* 52:2, 415–444.

Krifka, Manfred 2007. Basic Notions on Information Structure. In: Féry, Caroline & Fanselow, Gisbert & Krifka, Manfred (eds.). *The Notions of Information Structure*. Interdisziplinäre Studien zur Informationsstruktur 6. Potsdam: Universitätsverlag, 13–55.

Nikolaeva, Irina 2003. Possessive affixes as markers of information structuring: Evidence from Uralic. In: Suihkonen, P. & Comrie, B. (eds.). *International symposium on deictic systems and quantification in languages spoken in Europe and North and Central Asia*. Collection of papers. Izhevsk/Leipzig: Udmurt State University/Max Planck Institute of Evolutionary Anthropology, 130–145.

Serdobol’skaya, Natalia B. & Toldova, Svetlana Ju. 2016. Strukturnaja pozicija prjamogo dopolnenija i ego kommunikativnyj status (na materiale pečorskogo dialekta komi-zyrjanskogo jazyka). In: In: Cimmerling, A. V. & Ljutikova, E. A. (red.). *Arxitektura klauzy v parametričeskix modeljax: sintaksis, informacionnaja struktura, porjadok slov*. Moskva: Jazyki slavjanskoj kul’tury.