

## Fake possessives, partitives and definites sharing the same D

**Proposal:** This talk deals with the structure of noun phrases in Meadow Mari (Uralic). Specifically, I investigate the non-possessive use of the 3SG possessive suffix, for which I propose that it spells out a D<sup>0</sup>, with the possessor position being occupied by *pro*, whose referent is contextually determined ('fake possessives'). The empirical arguments are based on noun phrase ellipsis (NPE) and double possessive constructions in which a 3SG 'fake' possessive co-occurs with a regular possessor. The topic has implications for the emergence of Ds, the (re)analysis of possessives, the typology of partitive constructions as well as for the role of contrast in NPE.

**Background:** Mari nouns inflect for number, case and possessiveness; the morphemes may appear in various orders (Alhoniemi 1993; Riese et al. 2017; Simonenko & Leontyev 2012; Guseva & Weisser 2018; Pleshak 2019). Mari is an articleless language, but as in other Uralic languages, the 3SG POSS suffix has non-possessive, determiner-like uses. Simonenko (2014, 2017) argues that in Mari, these non-possessive uses are limited to contexts with a proper subset antecedent, i.e., partitives: '(He bought 3 books). He is reading book-POSS:3SG (from those).'

**NPE in Mari:** Mari allows NPE in linguistic (inter-/intrasentential) contexts as well as in extralinguistic ones. The case morphology of the elided NP is never absent; it appears stranded onto the (last) remnant. Additionally, a 3SG POSS suffix may also appear on the remnant (1).

- (1) Nele sumka-t üstembalne, a kuštâlgâ-žo polkâšto.  
 heavy bag-POSS:2SG on.table but light-POSS:3SG on.shelf  
 'Your heavy bag is on the table, and the/your light one is on the shelf.'

Based on novel data coming from my fieldwork, I argue that: ❶ the POSS suffix is licit (and preferred) in NPE if the remnant and the correlate are understood to belong to a set (→ part-whole relation) and the remnant is interpreted as specific in the sense of Enç (1991); ❷ definite readings are also possible, subject to interspeaker variation. The former claim is in line with Simonenko's (2014, 2017) observations about the use of POSS in non-elliptical contexts, the latter is not.

❶ is supported by cases in which POSS *cannot* appear: neither a part-whole, nor a definite reading is possible in (2), as the antecedent clause does not contain a correlate for the remnant ('green dress' does not belong to the set of referents introduced in the antecedent clause) → POSS is out.

- (2) Context: I show you several dresses, none of which is green, and ask: "Do you like them?"

(Môlam) takšêm užar(gâ)-(\*že) kelša âle.  
 1SG.DAT generally green-POSS:3SG appeal.PRS.3SG be.PST.3SG  
 'Generally, I like green ones/I would prefer a green one.'

❷: the possessive suffix can be used with a part-whole reading (thus, indicating that the referent belongs to a set, cf. Enç 1991 and É. Kiss & Tánzos 2018 for Udmurt), but some speakers allow a definite use of the suffix, too. The two uses can be told apart with the following context:

- (3) Mom baked pancakes.

a. Tudo kumât-(š)-âm χolodil'nik-âš šândâš, a kokât-(š)-âm üstembake.  
 3SG three-POSS:3SG-ACC fridge-ILL put.PST.3SG but two-POSS:3SG-ACC onto.table  
 'She put three (of them) into the fridge and two (of them) on the table.' [part-whole]  
 b. %Maša kokât-š-âm kočkân, a Taña kumât-š-âm.  
 Masha two-POSS:3SG-ACC eat.PRF.3SG but Tanya three-POSS:3SG-ACC  
 'Masha ate the two (from the table), and Tanya the three (from the fridge).' [definite]

In the proper subset context (3a), the use of POSS on the numeral remnant is allowed and preferred by the speakers. Importantly, not all speakers allow the suffix in (3b). For those who don't, the suffix is limited to proper subset contexts (3a), but it is ungrammatical in the definite context (3b) (in the latter case, only a bare form can be used). Those who do accept (3b), however, use the suffix as a definiteness marker, obligatory in this context. Observe that the elliptical NP is identical with the one in the antecedent clause not only wrt cardinality, as it also denotes the maximal plural entity that satisfies the description, maximality being one of the hallmarks of

