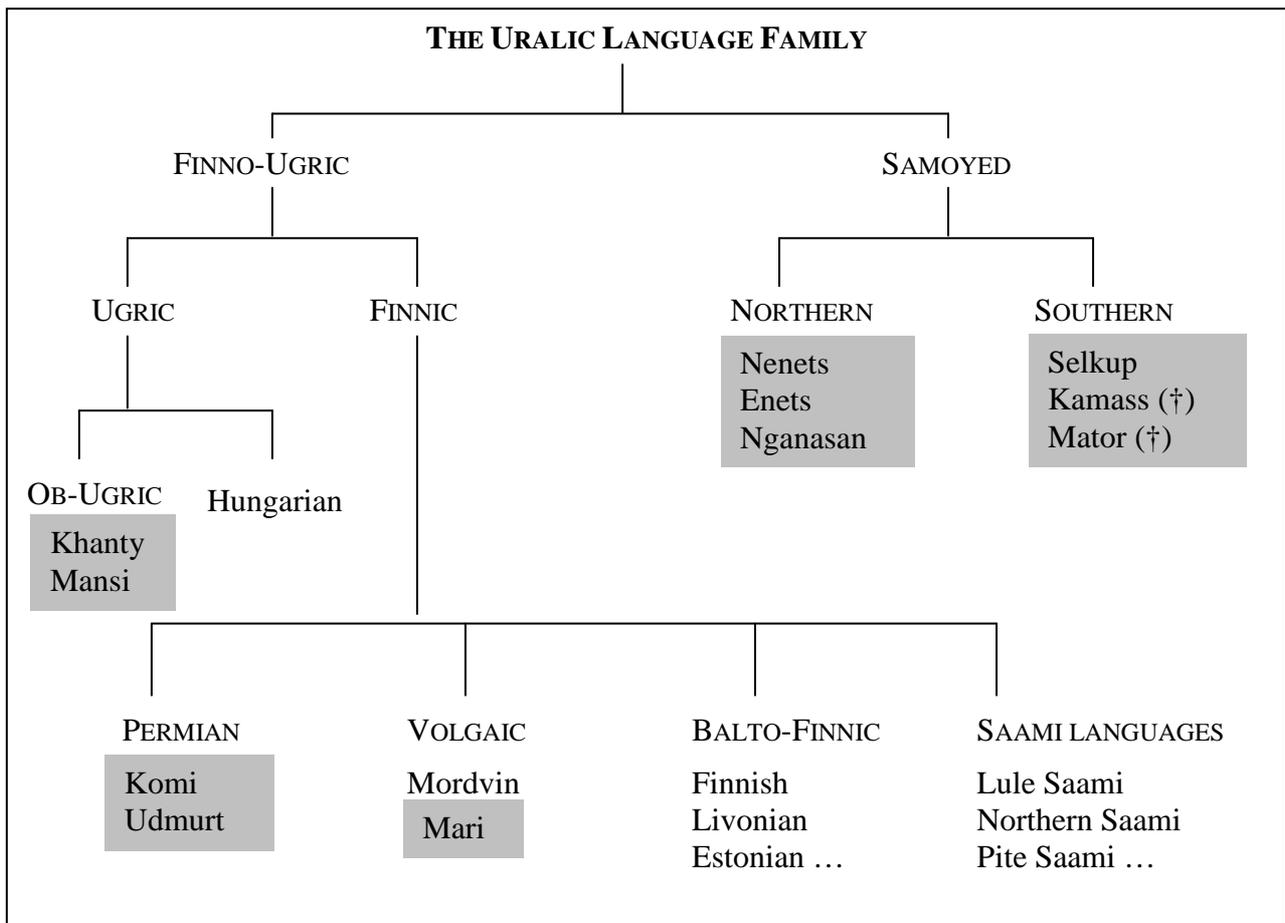


POSSESSIVE SUFFIXES AS DEFINITENESS MARKERS

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1. Background

1.1 Possession and definiteness marking in the Uralic languages

Possessive suffixes

(1) Udmurt:

*tir-e*  
 axe-POSS1SG  
 ‘my axe’

(2) Komi:

*ux-t*  
 head-POSS3SG  
 ‘his/her head’

(3) Hungarian:

*lány-a-i-nk*  
 girl-POSS-PL-1PL  
 ‘our daughters’

- agree with/indicate the possessor in person and number
- are not restricted in their use as possessive markers, mark any kind of possession
- can co-occur with other possessive markers (e.g. case, predicative possession)
- not obligatory, but frequently used to mark possession

## Definiteness marking

### Strategies of definiteness marking

- Free articles (4)
- Bound articles: definite vs. indefinite declension (5)

(4) Hungarian:

*a ház-ban*  
DEF house-INESS  
'in the house'

(5) Mordvin:

*kudo-so*  
house-DEF.INESS  
'in the house'

- Word order
- Subject/object case-contrast
- Verbal conjugation (Hungarian, Ob-Ugric, Samoyedic, Mordvin)

► Most of the Uralic languages lack “true” definite articles.

Some of the languages (Udmurt, Komi, Mari, Khanty, Mansi, the Samoyedic languages) without “true” articles use possessive suffixes to indicate the definiteness of the host noun (cf. Collinder 1955, Bechert 1993, Fraurud 2001, Künnap 2004, Nikolaeva 2003, Rédei 1978, Schlachter 1960, Schroeder 2006).

## 1.2 Functions of the definite article

Classification of the use of definite articles (Hawkins 1978, Lyons 1999):

- ◆ direct anaphoric use: *a car ... **the** car*
- ◆ immediate situation use: [in a car] *press **the** clutch!*
- ◆ associative anaphoric use: *a book ... **the** author*
- ◆ larger situation use: [in Great Britain] ... ***the** queen*

Kinds of uniqueness indicated by the definite article (Löbner 1985, 2011, Gerland&Horn 2010, Ortman to appear)

- ◆ Pragmatic uniqueness: dependent on special situations and contexts for the non-ambiguity (and existence) of a referent  
*the book you bought yesterday; I saw a girl, the girl was pretty*
- ◆ Semantic uniqueness: referent established independently of the immediate situation or context of utterance, the referent is inherently unique  
*the sun, the pope, the mother of Peter*

## 1.3 Possessive suffixes with definiteness marking function

Direct anaphoric use

(6) Northern Mansi (Data from the Project „Typology of Negation in Ob-Ugric and Samoyedic languages“, text03.123)

*Nājəŋxāp-n tāl-i, nājəŋxāp-e Samarowa-n juwle joxt-i*  
steamboat-LAT sit.down-3SG **steamboat-3SG** Samarowa-LAT back come/arrive-3SG  
'He gets on the steamboat, the steamboat takes him back to Samarowa.'

(7) Northern Khanty (NoS, text09.020)

*J̄ypǒx-t mǎn-əm j̄ūwpə-na ʔs'ə xu-t j̄ǒxət-ə-s-3*  
 brother-3SG go-PT.PRF back.part-LOC same **man-3SG** come-EP-PST-3SG  
 'After her brother had gone away, the same man came again.'

(8) Nganasan (NoS, Kehy Luu, NK-94\_kehy\_luu.024-026)

*Tori t̄ai-mumba-tu*  
 hearth fly-HABIT-PRS  
 '[...] there is a hearth.'

*Tuu tam s'ia i-s'üðə tori-tii ɲil'iʔia*  
 fire there.far hole be-FUT **hearth-GEN.3SG** down  
 'The fire is there, the pit is under the hearth.'

*Təndə-mtu tori-mtü d'übiā-l-məbt i-ʔə təndə*  
 that-ACC.3SG **hearth-ACC.3SG** throw.out-DRV-DRV-PF there

*s'ia-tu kun'd'i huānu-ʔə təndə*  
**hole-GEN.3SG** inside put-PF there  
 'He threw off the hearth and put it [a spear] there.'

Immediate situation use

(9) Komi (Nikolaeva 2003:7)

*Wanta tǎm mašinaj-en jowra mǎnəs.*  
 look DEM car-2SG awry went.3SG  
 'Look, the car went awry.'

Associative anaphoric use

(10) Udmurt (Winkler 2001:32)

*Guždur vīl̄n tur̄n-ez čeber.*  
 meadow.NOM on **grass-3SG** beautiful  
 'On the meadow the grass is beautiful.'

(11) Nganasan (NoS, meu djamezi.002/3)

*S'it̄abi d'ebtu-ʔkə-ʔə-m d'ürimiaku n'im-tu kəhi luu*  
 tale tell-RES-PF-1SG shorttale **name-3SG** partridge parka  
 'I'm telling a tale, a short tale, its name is Kehy Luu.'

*tahariaa büübtar-tu tərəd'i kərutətu mou-ntənu s'iti maʔ nən`d`i-t3*  
 now **start-3SG** such ordinary earth-LOC two tent stand-PRS  
 'Well in the beginning there are two tents simply standing on the ground.'

(12) Komi (Klumpp 2009:332)

*Pop* *lokt-is* [...] *vos't-is* *öd'z'ös-sö.*  
priest come-PRT3SG [at the woman's house] open-PRT3SG **door-ACC3SG**  
'The priest arrived [at the woman's house]. He opened the door.'

Larger Situation use

(13) Forest Nenets (NoS, shicha\_ne\_ngashki 056)

*Tajʔn'a* ***xila-ta*** *kaʔmaj*  
then **snow-3SG** fall.NARR  
'Then, the snow fell.'

(14) Nganasan (Wagner-Nagy 2002:79)

***Kou-δu*** *kantü''ə* *čürü''* *tagə*  
**Sun-3SG** disappeared cloud.PL.GEN behind  
'The sun disappeared behind the clouds.'

(15) Nganasan (NoS, NK-94\_kehy\_luu.044)

***Duə-mtu*** *rugaet*<sup>1</sup>  
**deity-ACC3SG** curse-3SG  
,He curses God.'

## 2. Definitely not possessed?

Fraurud (2001: 249): "Possessive suffixes may grammaticalize into def[inite articles], the process starts by an extension within associative anaphora."

Overlap of definiteness/possession: *I saw a house. The/Its roof was leaking.*

Nikolaeva (2003:13): "[...] the possessive affixes can express any kind of association between the host noun and another entity"

### 2.1 Functions of the possessive suffix

#### Association

- Indicating possessive relation between a possessor and a possessee  
*or*
- Indicating any kind of relation between two entities (associative anaphora)  
*or*
- Establishing a relation to shared knowledge, to the discourse (anaphora, immediate situation use, larger situation use)

Possessive suffixes indicate any kind of possession the kind of relation between possessor and possessee is not fixed.

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<sup>1</sup> *rugaet* is Russian.



(18) Tundra Nenets (NoS, tesjada\_nisjami 028)

*ti-da*            *pod'er-ŋa*            *ŋædala-j-ʔ*  
**reindeer-3SG** harness-CO3SG      travel.by.sleigh-CO-3SGREFL  
He harnessed the reindeer and left.

‘reindeer’: a herd of reindeers is aforementioned, ‘he’ is not the owner

(19) Northern Khanty (NoS, text09 012)

*Ne-t-na*            *ux-t*            *kǎnš-ta*            *pŭt-s-a*  
**woman-3SG-LOC** head-3SG      search-INF      begin-PST-PASS.3SG  
‘The woman started looking on his head.’

woman: aforementioned

(20) Tundra Nenets (NoS, t'et wel'i teta 084)

*Xajer-ta*            *pakal-c'*            *ŋisi-n*            *tæwi-dʔ*  
**sun-3SG** set-INF      nomad.camp-DAT      arrive-3PL  
‘They arrived at the camp at sunset.’

sun: not aforementioned

(21) Nganasan (LangueDoc, vb.013)

*ŋanaʔsan-əʔ* *ŋanuə* *ŋuku-ʔ*            *i-bahu-ʔ*            *ma-tu*            *kunsi-ni*  
man-PL      real      many-PL      be-NARR-3PL      **tent-GEN3SG** inside-LOC  
‘Many people were in the tent.’

tent: not aforementioned, no possessor available

➔ Definitely not possessed in the strict sense of possession, but associated.

### 3. Noun semantics

#### 3.1 Concept types

‘A is associated to B’

Claim: The interpretation of the suffix as either a marker of possession or a marker of definiteness (or both) is influenced by the context and the concept type of the marked noun. The concept type determines the kind of association between A and B, and the kind of B.

		<b>inherently unique</b>
	<b>SORTAL NOUNS</b> <i>stone book adjective water</i>	<b>INDIVIDUAL NOUNS</b> <i>moon weather date Maria</i>
<b>inherently relational</b>	<b>RELATIONAL NOUNS</b> <i>sister leg part attribute</i>	<b>FUNCTIONAL NOUNS</b> <i>father head age subject (gramm.)</i>

Concept types and their predisposed grammatical uses (cf. Löbner 1985, 2011)

#### 3.2 Concept types and the possessive suffix

Individual nouns:

(22) Forest Nenets (NoS, shicha\_ne\_ngashki 056)

*Tajʔn'a*      *xita-ta*      *kaʔmaj*  
then          snow-3SG      fall.NARR  
‘Then, the snow fell.’

(23) Komi (Nikolaeva 2003:3):

*šondi-ys*                  *nebo-ys*  
sun-3SG                  sky-3SG  
‘the sun’                  ‘the sky’

Individual nouns are inherently unique, [+U] and [-R]

Effect

- the suffix is interpreted definite
- the noun is associated to world knowledge, larger situation

Relational nouns:

(24) Komi (Hausenberg 1998: 313)

*vok-īs*  
brother-3SG  
‘his brother’

(25) Northern Khanty (NoS, text09 020)

*Jǵpǒx-t mǎn-əm jǵwpǎ-na ǵs'ǎ xu-t jǒxǎt-ǎ-s-3*  
**brother-3SG** go-PT.PRF back.part-LOC same man-3SG come-EP-PST-3SG  
'After her brother had gone away, the same man came again.'

Relational nouns are inherently relational, [+R] and [-U].

Effect:

- the suffix is interpreted possessive
- the noun is associated to a possessor
- a definite component is still available, (*possessive weak definites*)

Functional nouns:

(26) Northern Mansi (NoS, text02.020)

*Mǎyl-etaj s'ar t'ǵr-ǎ-l nas wol'ǵ-i*  
**chest-3SG** then totally iron-EP-INSTR simply sparkle-3SG  
'His chest simply sparkled with all the decorations.'

(27) Komi (Klumpp 2009:332)

*Pop lokt-is [...] vos't-is ǒd'z'ǒs-sǒ*  
priest come-PRT3SG [at the woman's house] open-PRT3SG **door-ACC3SG**  
'The priest arrived [at the woman's house<sup>2</sup>]. He opened the door.'

(28) Selkup, Tas-dialect (NoS, text2.012)

*Ima-t i n ik kǎt i-ǵ- i-t i*  
**wife-3SG** so say-PRS-EP-3SGO  
'The wife says [to him]'

Functional nouns are inherently relational and inherently unique, [+R] and [+U]

Effect:

- the suffix is interpreted as both possessive and definite
- the noun is associated to an anchor (which might be a possessor)

Sortal nouns:

(29) Udmurt (Winkler 2001: 77)

*Mon so-leš lǵdž-ono kǵnǵga-z-e adž-i*  
I he-ABL read-PART **book-3SG-ACC** see-PRT1SG  
'I saw the book which must be read by him.'

(30) Northern Khanty (NoS, text09 012)

*Ne-t-na ux-t kǵnš-ta pǵt-s-a*  
**woman-3SG-LOC** head-3SG search-INF begin-PST-PASS.3SG  
'The woman started looking on his head.'

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<sup>2</sup> The house was aforementioned, cf. Klumpp 2009:332.

(31) Northern Mansi (Data from the Project Obbabel/Eurobabel, Ludwig-Maximilians Universität München, Lu:ima se:ripos, sentence 21)

*Su:j pil lu:pta pa:ηxwit josa-η xumi-te s:aj aj-s jol ta xuj-as.*  
lingonberry leaf wide ski-with **man-3SG** tea drink-PRT3SG down ACT lay  
'The man with skis, small like lingonberry leaves, drank tea, afterwards he lay down.'

(32) Northern Khanty (NoS, text09 020)

*J̄ypǒx-t mǎn-əm j̄ūwpə-na ʔs'ə xu-t j̄ǒxət-ə-s-3*  
brother-3SG go-PT.PRF back.part-LOC same **man-3SG** come-EP-PST-3SG  
'After her brother had gone away, the same man came again.'

Sortal nouns are inherently non-relational and inherently non-unique, [-R] and [-U]  
Effect:

- suffix might be interpreted as possessive
- suffix might be interpreted as definite

→ Interpretation of the suffix and association of the noun depends on the context

## 4. Further kinds of association

### 4.1 The 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular possessive suffix

Künnap (2004: 62): "Likewise, in Zyrian Komi there is a tendency, namely when the 3<sup>rd</sup> possessive suffix indicates general definiteness, then, additionally, the 2<sup>nd</sup> possessive suffix indicates that the talk is about something which is just here, near, that may be pointed at during conversation."

(33) Komi (Künnap 2004:62)

a *V̄er-as l̄imj-ʔs s̄ilema n'in*  
forest-INESS.**3SG** snow-**3SG** melted already  
'In the forest the snow has melted already.'

b *V̄er-ad l̄imj-ʔd s̄ilema n'in*  
forest-INESS.**2SG** snow-**2SG** melted already  
'In the forest the snow has melted already.'

Rédei (1978): „emotional distance“

Schlachter (1960): „Subjektivierung“ (“subjectivization”)

(34) Tundra Nenets (NoS, tesjada\_nisjami 010)

*Mantu teta-r xo-t-wa!*  
Mantu land.owner-**2SG** bring-IMP.2SG-EXCL  
'Bring the rich Mantu here!'

(35) Mari (Kangasmaa-Minn 1997: 229)

*kugužan iid^ər-et*  
weeping princess-**2SG**  
'The princess is weeping.'

(36) Nganasan (NoS, NK-94\_kehy\_luu.236)

*Bəlt i s'itəb i-rə d'indi-?ə-ŋ*  
all tale-2SG hear-PF-2SG  
'End of the tale, did you hear?'

The possessive suffix of the 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular links the marked noun to the hearer, the suffix can be used intentionally to establish a close link between referent and hearer or to express an assumed close relation between them.

[Compare German *Dein Paul hat angerufen* , Your Paul has called. ']

(37) Mansi (NoS, text02.069/02.070)

*Mātra S'il'ka pāyl'e ti jūw. Lōŋxan's'ap-a-ne sujt-ē-γət*  
Matra Silka to.the.herd so come.3SG bell-EP-PL.2SG sound-EP-3PL  
'Matra Silka goes to the herd. The bells [lit.: your bells] are ringing.'

#### 4.2 The 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural possessive suffix

The 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural has a “selective” function in Nganasan and Nenets (Wagner-Nagy 2002:85).

(38) Nganasan (Wagner-Nagy 2002:85/6)

*mend'ad'ə-δuŋ*  
lot.new  
'the new between the many'

(39) Nganasan (Wagner-Nagy 2002:85/6)

*śela'ku-δuŋ*  
many.small-3PL  
'the small between the many'

(40) (NoS, NK-94\_kehy\_luu.173)

*ma-tuŋ d'a bii-?ai-tə?*  
tent-GEN.PL.3PL ALL go.away-PF-3PL.R  
'They have all gone to their own camp.'

(41) (Wagner-Nagy 2002:85)

*Siti-diŋ bikaa tagə bəud'üəgəj, ŋuəcüŋ kou?ə mərutə*  
3.DU-3DU river.GEN behind cross.PERF.3DU.S one stay bank  
'Two of them crossed the river, one stayed at the bank.'

Hypothesis: In this cases the 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural picks out one entity and associates it to a set of many (of the same?) entities.

## 5. Conclusion

The possessive suffix of the 3<sup>rd</sup> person is rather a marker of association than of possession.

Main functions

- Establishing an associative relation
  - concrete associative relations are possessive relations, the marked noun is the possessum, the suffix indicates number and person of the possessor. The possessum is definite.
  - all other associative relations are non-possessive relations, the marked noun is (semantically or pragmatically) unique and hence definite. Depending on speakers assumption/intention about the hearers relation to the marked referent the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> person suffix is used.

The interpretation of the suffix(es) as possessive or definiteness marker depends on the conceptual type of the marked noun and on the context.

## 6. Epilogue

The use of the possessive suffix as definiteness marker is not obligatory.

Language	Sentences	Occurrences of 3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular suffix	Uses assumed as indicating definiteness <sup>3</sup>	Occurrences of demonstratives
Nganasan	583	68	29	52 (anaphoric and 1 <sup>st</sup> mention)
Forest Nenets	61	42	19	7 (anaphoric)
Tundra Nenets	260	47	15	23 (anaphoric)
Northern Khanty	186	82	39	19 (anaphoric)
Norther Mansi	224	52	8	23 (anaphoric and 1 <sup>st</sup> mention)

Fraurud (2001), Schroeder (2006): The non-obligatoriness of the possessive suffixes as definiteness markers is due to the fact that they are not fully grammaticalized as definite articles.

Further languages which use possessive markers as definiteness markers:

- Sakha (Yakuts, Turkic, cf. Pakendorf 2007)
- Dolgan (Turkic, cf. Stachowski 1998)
- Cirebon Javanese (cf. Ewing 1995)
- Gumer (South-Ethiosemitic, cf. Völlmin 2008)
- Amharic (cf. Beermann 2007)
- Old Mauritian Creole (cf. Guillemin 2007)

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<sup>3</sup> The remaining uses indicate both definiteness and possession.

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