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:
\[ a \text{ ház-ban} \]
DEF house-INNESS ‘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.


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, Ortmann 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)
\[ Näŋŋxäŋ-p-n \text{ tāl-i, nāŋŋxäŋ-e} \text{ Samarowa-n juwle joxt-i} \]
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)

\[
\text{Jyıpöx-t măn-oм jëwpo-na ıs’ö xu-t jöxeř-ə-s-3}
\]
\[\text{brother-3SG go-PT.PRF back.part-LOC same man-3SG come-EP-PST-3SG}\]

‘After her brother had gone away, the same man came again.’

(8) Nganasan (NoS, Kehy Luu, NK-94_kehy_luu.024-026)

\[
\text{Tori təi-mumba-tu}
\]
\[\text{hearth fly-HABIT-PRS}\]

‘[…] there is a hearth.’

\[
\text{Tuu tam s’iə i-s’üdə tori-tū yil’iʔia}
\]
\[\text{fire there.far hole be-FUT hearth-GEN.3SG down}\]

‘The fire is there, the pit is under the hearth.’

\[
\text{Təndə-mtu tori-mtū d’übi₃-l-mäht i-ʔə təndə}
\]
\[\text{that-ACC.3SG hearth-ACC.3SG throw.out-DRV-DRV-PRF there}\]

\[
\text{s’iə-tu kun’d’i huānu-ʔə təndə}
\]
\[\text{hole-GEN.3SG inside put-PF there}\]

‘He threw off the hearth and put it [a spear] there.’

Immediate situation use

(9) Komi (Nikolaeva 2003:7)

\[
\text{Wanta təm mašinaj-en jowra mănəs.}
\]
\[\text{look DEM car-2SG awry went.3SG}\]

‘Look, the car went awry.’

Associative anaphoric use

(10) Udmurt (Winkler 2001:32)

\[
\text{Guždur vilín turîn-ez čeber.}
\]
\[\text{meadow.NOM on grass-3SG beautiful}\]

‘On the meadow the grass is beautiful.’

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

\[
\text{S’iṭobi d’ebtu-ʔə-ʔə-m d’ürimiʔaku n’im-tu kəhī luu}
\]
\[\text{tale tell-RES-Pf-1SG shorttale name-3SG partridge parka}\]

‘I’m telling a tale, a short tale, its name is Kehy Luu.’

\[
\text{tahariaa büübtar-tu tərd’i kərutətu mou-ntənu s’iṭi məʔ nən’d’i-t3}
\]
\[\text{now start-3SG such ordinary earth-LOC two tent stand-PRS}\]

‘Well in the beginning there are two tents simply standing on the ground.’
Larger Situation use

(13) Forest Nenets (NoS, shicha_ne_ngashki 056)

\[ \text{Tajn’}a \quad xila-ta \quad ka\text{maj} \]
then \quad snow-3SG \quad fall.NARR

‘Then, the snow fell.’

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

\[ \text{Kou-}d\text{u} \quad kantü’}ə \quad čiirü’}t \quad tagə\]
Sun-3SG \quad disappeared \quad cloud.PL GEN \quad behind

‘The sun disappeared behind the clouds.’

(15) Nganasan (NoS, NK-94_kehy_luu.044)

\[ \text{Dua-}mtu \quad rugaet} \]
deity-Acc3SG \quad 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.

\[ rugaet} \] is Russian.
Jensen & Vikner (2002: 195)
‘The girls teacher’: lexical interpretation: ‘the person who is the teacher of the girl’
pragmatic interpretation: ‘the teacher she has married’
‘the teacher she is going to interview’
‘the teacher she is blackmailing’
‘the teacher she is dreaming of’

Kay & Zimmer (1976): “[…] the genitive is a metalinguistic instruction to the hearer that there is some kind of relation between the possessive NP and the head.”

⇒ Generalization: The possessive suffix is an instruction to the hearer to link the host noun to a possessor, if no possessor is available to link the host noun to the discourse, to shared or general knowledge, or to associate it with the setting the referent is in.

The possessive suffix indicates: A is associated to B

Definiteness
• Indicating the semantic or pragmatic uniqueness of a referent

Possessive suffix are possessive weak definites (cf. Barker 2000, 2004)

A possessive is definite iff its possessor is definite.
A possessive is familiar iff its possessor is familiar.

(16) Khanty (Nikolaeva in press:4)
a. ngømgewº nye ngøcyeki-h bantº sawa
   some woman child-GEN ribbon nice
   ‘One girl has a nice ribbon.’
b. ngømgewº nye ngøcyeki-h bantø-da sawa
   some woman child-GEN ribbon-3SG nice
   ‘One girl has a nice ribbon.’

⇒ Generalization: Nouns marked with the possessive suffix are definite.

2.2 Testing the assumption

(17) Nganasan (NoS, Kehy Luu, NK-94_kehy_luu.024)
[Context: Kehy Luu was in a tent. ‘He took a huge spear.’]
Tə ənti  tuj –t’ü  ənti  s’iə -ntiʔ  huan-ʔə-tu,
that sort.of fire-3SG sort.of hole-LAT.PL put-PF-3SG

tori təi-mumba-tu
hearth fly-HABIT-PRS
‘He put it in the pit under the fire, there is a hearth.’

fire: not aforementioned
(18) Tundra Nenets (NoS, tesjada_nisjami 028)

\[ ti-da \quad pod'er-\eta \quad \text{reindeer-3SG} \quad \text{harness-Co3SG} \quad \text{travel.by.sleigh-Co3SGREFL} \]

He harnessed the reindeer and left.

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

(19) Northern Khanty (NoS, text09 012)

\[ Ne-t-na \quad ux-t \quad kâns-ta \quad pît-s-a \]

\[ \text{woman-3SG-LOC} \quad \text{head-3SG} \quad \text{search-INF} \quad \text{begin-PST-PASS.3SG} \]

‘The woman started looking on his head.’

woman: aforementioned

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

\[ Xajer-ta \quad pakal-c' \quad iji-n \quad tæwi-d? \]

\[ \text{sun-3SG} \quad \text{set-INF} \quad \text{nomad.camp-DAT} \quad \text{arrive-3PL} \]

‘They arrived at the camp at sunset.’

sun: not aforementioned

(21) Nganasan (LangueDoc, vb.013)

\[ ñana?san-\eta \quad ñana\text{uo} \quad ñuku-? \quad i-bahu-? \quad ma-tu \quad kunsi-ni \]

\[ \text{man-PL} \quad \text{real} \quad \text{many-PL} \quad \text{be-NARR-3PL} \quad \text{tent-GEN3SG} \quad \text{inside-LOC} \]

‘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.

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</table>

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)

\[ Tajʔn'a \quad xila-ta \quad kaʔmaj \]

then snow-3SG fall.NARR

‘Then, the snow fell.’

(23) Komi (Nikolaeva 2003:3):

\[ šondi-ys \quad nebo-ys \]

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)

\[ vok-ǐs \]

brother-3SG

‘his brother’
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)

\[
\text{Māyl-etaj} \quad s'\text{ar} \quad t'\text{ēr-č-l} \quad n\text{as} \quad w\text{ol}'y\text{-i}
\]
chest-3SG then totally iron-Ep-Instr simply sparkle-3SG
‘His chest simply sparkled with all the decorations.’

(27) Komi (Klumpp 2009:332)

\[
\text{Pop lokt-is} \quad […] \quad \text{vos't-is} \quad \text{ōd'z'ōs-sō}
\]
priest come-PRT3SG [at the woman’s house] open-PRT3SG door-Acc3SG
‘The priest arrived [at the woman’s house]. He opened the door.’

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

\[
\text{Ima-t i} \quad nt \quad k\text{ē t-i-ŋ-j t i}
\]
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)

\[
\text{Mon so-leš līdž-ono kni\text{g}a-z-e adź-i}
\]
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)

\[
\text{Ne-t-na} \quad ux-t \quad kānš-ta \quad pīt-s-a
\]
woman-3SG-Loc head-3SG search-INF begin-PST-PASS.3SG
‘The woman started looking on his head.’

---

2 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)

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)

Jiŋpöx-t män-äm jiwpl-na ɨs’ə xu-t jóxət-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 2nd person singular possessive suffix

Künnap (2004: 62): “Likewise, in Zyrian Komi there is a tendency, namely when the 3rd possessive suffix indicates general definiteness, then, additionally, the 2nd 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  Vər-as  limj-is  sILEMA n’in
forest-INESS.3SG snow-3SG melted already
‘In the forest the snow has melted already.’

b  Vər-ad  limj-ıd  sILEMA 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)

kuguţan üd’ər-et
weeping princess-2SG
‘The princess is weeping.’
The possessive suffix of the 2nd 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.]
5. Conclusion

The possessive suffix of the 3rd person is a 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 2nd or 3rd 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.

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</table>

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)

³ The remaining uses indicate both definiteness and possession.
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