Possessive constructions in the Moksha language

Polina Pleshak, Moscow State University, *polinapleshak@yandex.ru*

Data :The Moksha-language<Mordvinic<Finno-Permic<Finnic<Finno-Ugric<Uralic
Fieldwork in Lesnoje Tsibajevo, Lesnoje Ardashevo, Lesnyje Sijali
Mordovia, Russia,
June-August, 2014

<u>3 types of declension</u>
<u>in Moksha</u>
- ✓ definite
- ✓ indefinite
- ✓ possessive

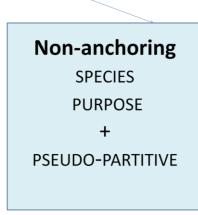**What are Possessive constructions?**
Not only constructions which refer to prototypical possessive relations like:
- **LEGAL OWNERSHIP**
- **KINSHIP** or
- **BODY-PART.**

Many other relations can have the same structure.
See [Koptjevskaja-Tamm, Maria (2002)]

Types of relations

✓"The possessors serve as *anchors or reference point entities for identification of the head*" [Koptjevskaja-Tamm 2002]

Anchoring	Non-anchoring
LEGAL OWNERSHIP	SPECIES
KINSHIP	PURPOSE
BODY-PART	+
AUTHOR/ORIGINATOR	PSEUDO-PARTITIVE
PART-WHOLE	
TEMPORAL	
LOCATIVE	

Theme of the research:
Semantics of possessive constructions to wide extent
➢ If there are different constructions
➢ semantic distribution of these constructions
<u>Typologically there are several possible constructions</u>
<u>in the languages of Europe that encode possessive relations:</u>
- **dependent-marking**
(RUS)отец девочк-и (the girl's father)
  father girl-GEN
- **double-marking**
(MOK)s't'ərn'ɛ-t' al'a-c
  girl-DEF.GEN father-3SG.POSS.SG
- **head-marking**
(TAT) malaj kitap-lar- ɤ (the boy's books)
  boy book-PL-IZF3   [Graschenkov,2007]
- **with prepositions**
The house of my parents
- **juxtaposition**
The autumn flower
and also
- **with linking pronouns** and
- **compounding**
[Koptjevskaja-Tamm, Maria (2002)]

Problem
Dependent with <u>definite</u> vs <u>indefinite</u> declension (genitive)
Dependent <u>genitive</u> vs <u>unmarked</u>
Head <u>with</u> vs <u>without</u> possessive marking

Claim 1: Definite genitive on the dependent requires obligatory <u>possessive marker</u> on the head.
Indefinite genitive presupposes <u>external marker</u> trigger

Only for anchoring relations with definite possessors
(legal ownership, kinship, body-part, originator, group-member, part-whole, temporal, locative)

dependent+DEF.GEN head+POSS

➢Anchoring relations with definite possessors
(1a)s't'ər'-nɛ-t' kukla-c   ašči   oza-də
girl-DIM-**DEF.SG.GEN** doll-**3SG.POSS.SG** be situated-NPST.3-SG sit- CONV.POSS
tabur'etka-t' lang-sə
chair-DEF.SG.GEN on-IN
The girl`s doll is sitting on the chair.

ORIGINATOR
(2a)s't'ər'-n'ɛ-t' st'ihotvor'en'ijə-nzə iz'-s't' tu
girl-DIM-**DEF.SG.GEN** poem-**3SG.POSS.PL** NEG.PST-PST.3-PL go-CN
učit'əl'-t' mɛl'-s
teacher-DEF.SG.GEN desire-ILL
The teacher didn't like the girl's poems.

➢Anchoring relations with definite possessors
(3a)mar'-t' ked'-əc ašč-i   morkš lang-sə
apple-**DEF.SG.GEN** peel-**3SG.POSS.SG** be situated- NPST.3-SG table on-IN
The peel of the apple is on the table

Claim 2: Unmarked dependent presupposes <u>external marker</u> trigger
This construction has more narrow usage, than one with indefinite genitive

➢Body-part, part-whole relations

dependent head+EMT

(3c)[ok] mar' ked' ašč-i   morkš lang-sə
apple-Ø peel-Ø be situated- NPST.3-SG table on-IN
An apple peel is on the table. (Compare with ex.(3b))

➢ Non-anchoring relations with non-countable/mass modifiers
GROUP-MEMBERSHIP
(4a)s't'ər'-n'ɛ gruppa-s' sa-s'   vel'-i
girl-DIM-**Ø** group-**DEF.SG** arrive- PST.3-SG village- LAT
The group of girls came to the village. (Not the group of boys)
PURPOSE
(5a)ved' vedərka-s' taštəm-s'
water-**Ø** pail-**DEF.SG** age-PST.3-SG
The water pail has become old.

NB:The change of construction (with the same words) leads to the semantic change

For non-anchoring relations and also for some anchoring relations
(species, purpose, predestination, group-membership, attributive)

dependent+GEN head+EMT

EMT-external marker trigger

➢Non-anchoring relations
(1b)ava-n' panar-s' povfta-f lavka-t' es-ə
woman-**GEN** dress- **DEF.SG** hang-PTCP.RES shop-DEF.SG.GEN in- IN
The woman dress hangs in the shop.

PREDESTINATION
(2b)s't'ər'-n'ɛ-n' st'ihotvor'en'ijə-t'n'ə iz'-s't'   tu
girl-**DIM-GEN** poem-**DEF.PL** NEG.PST-PST.3-PL go-CN
učit'əl'-t' mɛl'-s
teacher- DEF.SG.GEN desire- ILL
* The teacher didn't like the girl's poems.
The teacher didn't like the poems for girls.

➢Anchoring relations with indefinite inanimate possessors
3(b)mar'-ən' ked' ašč-i   morkš lang-sə
apple-**GEN** peel-**Ø** be situated- NPST.3-SG table on-IN
A peel of an apple is on the table. [ok] *An apple peel is on the table.*

Claim 3: Special construction with unmarked dependent encodes only <u>pseudo-partitive</u> relations
(the difference with the other construction with unmarked dependent consists in word order)

N1 N0 → N0 N1

➢Quantifier-mass
(4b) gruppa s't'ər'-n'ɛ -s' sa-s'   vel'-i
 group-**Ø** girl-**DIM-DEF.SG** arrive- PST.3-SG village- LAT
The group of girls came to the village.

➢Container-content
(5b)vedərka ved'-s' ašč-i   kuhn'ɛ-sə
 pail-**Ø** water- **DEF.SG** be situated- NPST.3-SG kitchen-IN
The pail of water is in the kitchen.

compare

Open questions

✓What other relations can also be encoded with possessive constructions?

✓What constructions are used in Moksha-language to express anchoring relations with animate referent indefinite possessors?

✓What semantic difference is between Dependent-marking and juxtaposition (N1 N0)?

1.Koptjevskaja-Tamm, Maria (2002). "Adnominal possession in the European languages: form and function". STUF, 55, 2, 141-172. 2. Graschenkov, P.V., "Ezafe constructions : multiple-factor analysis", Mishar dialect of Tatar language: essays about syntax and semantics – Kazan:Magarif, 2007., p.83-114. 3.Koptjevskaja-Tamm, Maria. Possessive noun phrases in the languages of Europe. In Plank F. (ed.) Noun Phrase Structure in the Languages of Europe. Berlin, NY: Mouton de Gruyter, 2003. P. 621–722. 4.Feoktistov, Aleksander . Category of possession in Mordvinic, Mordvinic publishing house, 1963