

## The syntax of belonging: cross-linguistic variation within Uralic

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We discuss the sentence type *The book is yours/Ivan's*, which we will call ‘belong’-construction (Heine (1997) in three Uralic languages: Tundra Nenets, Udmurt and Hungarian. This is a typologically relatively understudied clause type but in the literature it has been characterized either as a subtype of predicative possession (e.g. Stassen 2009) or among minor clause types with nonverbal predicates (Dryer 2007). We will show that these sentences behave like copular clauses and unlike predicative possessives in these languages: Hungarian and Tundra Nenets use nominal predicate constructions, while the corresponding Udmurt constructions are rather to be analyzed as locative clauses.

**Background:** The ‘belong’-construction is a special case of copular sentences: its predicate is a possessive construction and the subject is a definite/referential nominal, which is notionally the possessee, hence the possible “NP1 belongs to NP2” paraphrase. The clause type is used when the possessee within the predicate (NP2) is anaphoric, and as a result, it is easy to be pronominalized or omitted. Languages may display syntactic patterns in the ‘belong’-construction that differ from adnominal possessive expressions.

As a starting point it is worth noting that adnominal possessive constructions are similar in the languages discussed: the possessor is either nominative/unmarked or case-marked (genitive/dative) and the possessee bears a possessive suffix (1)–(3).

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| (1)a. mañ kñiga-m'í<br>1SG book-POSS.1SG                   | b. Ivan-? kñiga(-da)<br>Ivan-GEN book(-POSS.3SG)                 | [Tundra Nenets] |
| (2)a. az én könyv-em<br>the 1SG book-POSS.1SG              | b. Iván(-nak a) könyv-e<br>Ivan(-DAT the) book-POSS              | [Hungarian]     |
| (3)a. mįnam kñiga-je<br>1SG.GEN book-POSS.1SG<br>'my book' | b. Ivan-len kñiga-jez<br>Ivan-GEN book-POSS.3SG<br>'Ivan's book' | [Udmurt]        |

With respect to the ‘belong’-construction, however, the three languages utilize different strategies. Tundra Nenets always includes the possessee in NP2. If the possessor is pronominal, the possessee in NP2 takes possessive suffixes (4a), similarly to adnominal possession (1a). In contrast, in the case of a lexical possessor, the possessee agrees with the subject of the clause and it takes the regular verb inflection (4b).

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| (4)a. t'uku kñiga pida kñiga-da.<br>this book 3SG book-POSS.3SG<br>'This book is his/hers (lit. his/her book).' | [Tundra Nenets] |
| b. t'uku kñiga Ivan-? kñiga.<br>this book Ivan-GEN book.3SG<br>'This book is Ivan's (lit. Ivan's book).'        |                 |

In the other two languages, the ‘belong’-construction does not include the possessee in NP2. Hungarian uses a suffix *-é* on the possessor, which is different from the marking of adnominal possessors (nominative/unmarked or dative-marked) (2). Pronominal possessors additionally bear possessive agreement following the *-é* suffix (5).

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| (5) Ez a könyv Iván-é / a ti-é-d.<br>this the book Ivan-é / the you-é-POSS.2SG<br>'This book is Ivan's / yours.' | [Hungarian] |
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Udmurt simply uses a genitive-marked possessor, similarly to adnominal possession (6).

- (6) Ta khiga Ivan-len / t̥nad. [Udmurt]  
this book Ivan-GEN / you.GEN  
'This book is Ivan's / yours.'

**Analysis:** We propose that languages differ in (dis)allowing the possessor to appear without the possessee in NP2, and thus might opt for different strategies in the 'belong'-construction: (i) One strategy involves the obligatory presence of the possessee, as in Tundra Nenets, which makes it structurally identical to a regular copular clause with a nominal predicate. (ii) Another strategy omits the possessee, in which case it may still be covertly there (either as a silent pronoun or having been elided), as in Hungarian, or it may be absent from the structure completely, which we suggest is the case for Udmurt.

When the possessee is not overtly present, the case marking of the possessor is one crucial difference between Hungarian and Udmurt. The Hungarian suffix *-é* has been analyzed as a pro-form by Laczkó 2007 and more recently as a genitive case marker by Bartos (2001) and Dékány (2015), whose proposal we follow. The presence of a silent possessor is supported empirically by the possible combination of the suffix *-é* with further case-endings, with a plural suffix, or with an agreement marker, as was illustrated in (5). This leads us to conclude that the Hungarian 'belong'-construction is a copular clause with a nominal predicate, similarly to Tundra Nenets, and while Hungarian may omit the possessee in NP2, it does so from a different construction, where the possessor is in the genitive.

The Udmurt 'belong'-construction poses problems when we apply the same analysis as to the other two languages. If we are dealing with a nominal clause in Udmurt as well, it should be analyzed as involving an adnominal possessive with a silent possessee in NP2. Nominal ellipsis is normally signalled by a 3sg possessive marker attached to the possessor (7) (Winkler 2001; É. Kiss & Tánčzos 2018).

- (7) T̥nad-ez tat̥n. [Udmurt]  
you.GEN-3SG here  
'Yours is here.'

In the 'belong'-construction, however, such markers do not appear (6), leaving us with no trace of any covert material. While entertaining the possibility that the lack of the possessive marker is due to an independent factor (namely, referentiality), we propose that the genitive possessor in these constructions is not part of a genuine possessive construction but behaves like the predicate of a locative sentence. This claim is supported by diachronic observations, according to which the Udmurt genitive originates from a locative case, cf. Bartens (2000). Thus, Udmurt genitives differ from Tundra Nenets genitives, which only appear adnominally, and also from Hungarian datives, which do have a non-possessive use, but then they mark a recipient in the clause, incompatible with the predication of 'belonging'.

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