

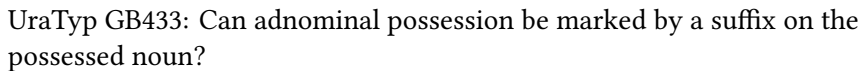
A diachronic perspective on the discursive functions of the Mari 3SG possessive suffix

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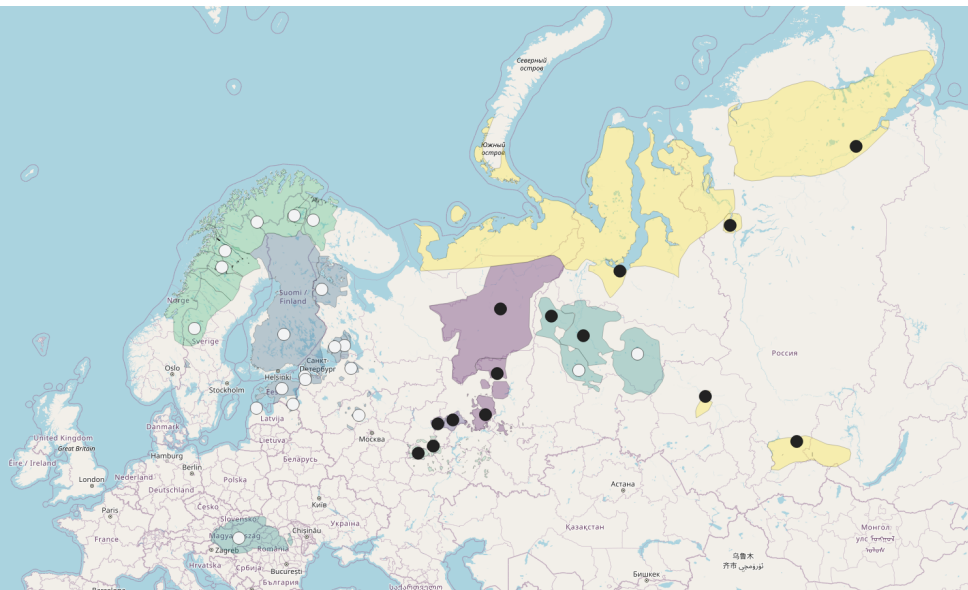


“Non-possessive” functions

(1) Contemporary Spoken Meadow Mari

No *pürtüsše* peš saj, a *uslovijže* saj ogəl ilaš.
well nature.ŽE very good but circumstance.ŽE good NEG live

‘Well, **nature** (there) is very nice, but the **circumstances** are not, to live (there).’



UraTyp UT105: Can 3Sg possessive suffix be used to mark **definiteness**?

Complications

- So many functions?
 - “Emphasis”; identifiability (Nikolaeva 2003); “membership of the referent in a previously introduced or otherwise indicated group” (Simonenko 2014); specificity (Simonenko 2017); Contrastive Topicalization (Georgieva 2022); contrast or topic shift + enimitive (Hirvonen 2024)
- Too little differentiation
- Examples sometimes lacking context
- Heterogenous data sources – early 20th century folklore; Soviet era prose; elicited 21st century data
 - Pre-Soviet and Post-Soviet Uralic languages can differ in many respects

Example 1

- Simonenko (2014, 2017):

Vasja [kniga-m]_{eNP₁} nal-ən. Tač'e tudo [(tide) kniga-(*ž)-əm]_{eNP₂}
Vasja book-ACC buy-NARR.3SG today he (that) book-(*3SG)-ACC
lud-eš.
read-PRS.3SG
'Vasja bought a book. Today he is reading that book.'
[Mari] ANAPHORIC ANTECEDENT – NO

- But Georgieva (2022): Variation between consultants in this context

Example 1

- Sernur (Wichmann 1931: 43):

ù·dərən a₁tšəž-de·n aβà·žā jù·mām nà·lān sù·γānām puat ü·dər-de·n
kà₁tšāla·n:

»taža· pijāla·n li·zà, kužu:-ùmāra·n li·zà, šotšša·n, βò·lēka·n,
kinda·n, kaβana·n li·zà! jù:mā-de·n pârġa· ka·izà!» mà·nât.

jù·māžām nalę·š kì·dēškē tü·ŋ-kart ta ü·dər-de·n pârġa· kondà·.

(NB: The decisive factor is likely not the anaphoric antecedent, but the topic status.)

Example 2

- e.g. Tuzharov (1987), Bereczki (1990), Alhoniemi (1993), Andreeva (2014): Attachment to finite verbs possible

A təj kuze jöratet-še?
and you how love.2SG-3SG

And how do you love? (Bereczki 1990: 43)

- (So far) not attested in my sample of ŽE in Pre-Soviet texts (~ 200 examples)

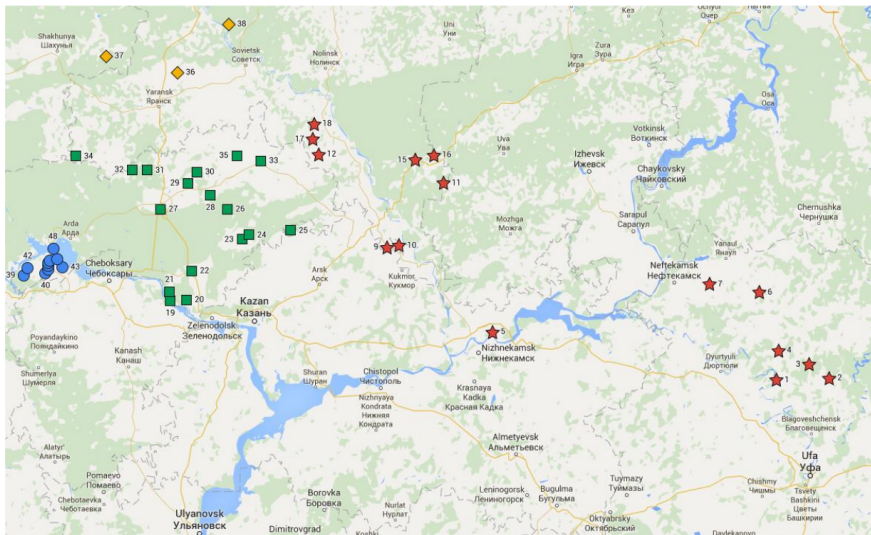
Complications

Kiss & Tánczos (2018: 738)

Although certain aspects of Udmurt syntax, especially word order, have changed considerably under the influence of Russian in the past 130 years, we see no noticeable differences between nineteenth-century and contemporary texts as regards the distribution and the functions of *-jez*.

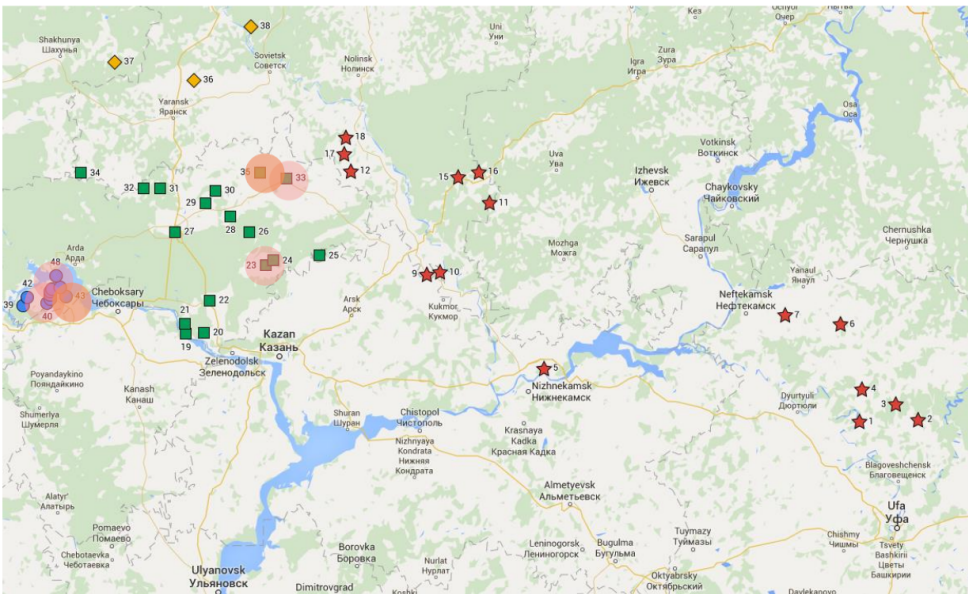
Aim of this study

- Show diachronic variation of žE between Mari varieties from ~110 years ago and today
- (Show diatopic variation of žE between Mari varieties from ~ 110 years ago)



Bradley (2016: 126)

Hill Mari	Vysokovo	(Beke 1951)
	Tušnal	(Ramsted 1902)
	Kuznecovo	(Corpus 2019)
Meadow Mari	Azjal	(Wichmann 1931)
	Sernur & Pulanur	(Wichmann 1931, Alhoniemi & Saarinen 1983)
	Saryj Torjal	(Volkova 2025)



Bradley (2016: 126)

- ~ 30 non-possessive instances per variety
- Coded for the parameters:
 - Category of host
 - Position of host in the clause
 - Type of topic progression (if applicable)
 - Is the referent of the host identifiable, and if yes, how?
 - Referential distance

Generalizations

- Usage appears to be optional
- Almost always on nominal constituents in the left periphery
 - New texts: + verbs, interrogative pronouns, adpositions, proper nouns, adverbs
- Mostly anaphoric identifiability (but not unique referents or deictic identifiability) sometimes bridging, very rarely new referents
- Almost always topical constituents; and in this case a topic shift, rarely continuations
- Referential distance mostly short (a few words), rarely up to >200 words

Typical anaphoric topic shift

(2) Sernur (Wichmann 1931: 163)

orolen šòγâšâ jəŋžə töršten lektən da
guard.CVB stand.PTCP man.ŽE jump.CVB go.out.PST.3SG and
kalasen: ...
say.PST.3SG

‘(The relatives made one man stay in the house to secretly watch the child. The lame child got up and started talking about what it should eat for dinner.) The guarding **man** jumped out (from hiding) and said: ...’

- Referent identifiable by anaphora
- Short referential distance
- Topic shift

“Adversative” Topic Shift

- (3) Sernur (Wichmann 1931: 160–161)

mari pörteš uškallan βaren da uškalžâm pukχšaš
Mari house.LAT cow.DAT mix.PST.3SG and cow.PX3SG.ACC feed.INF

purten. a tûδê mari kniškažâm mari ala-molan koŋga
lead.in.PST.3SG but this Mari book.ŽE.ACC man INDEF-why oven

βoktek pâšten da nalaš monden.
side put.PST.3SG and take.INF forget.PST.3SG

‘(It is told that a long time ago the Mari, too, had a **book in the Mari language**.) A Mari man mixed (food) for his cow and lead it in for feeding it. But **that Mari book**, the Mari man for some reason put on the side of the oven and forgot to take it away.’

Contrastive Topic

(4) Azjal (MM) (Wichmann 1931: 165)

tužetš merañ kuḍaleš pârš-tek i pârš-tetš joḍeš: [...] pâršâžâ
from.here hare runs to.cat and from.cat asks cat.ŽE

kalasa: [...] merañžâ baštareš kalasa [...]
says hare.ŽE against says

‘From there the hare runs to the cat and asks the cat: [...] **The cat** says:
[...] **The hare** replies: [...]’

Partitive-like function

- (5) Sernur (Wichmann 1931: 55)

βara puršâ jəŋ koglaštâ ik jəŋžə kalasaš tūŋaləš: ...
then enter.PTCP man among one man.ŽE speak.INF start.3SG

‘(Then the men enter the house again. One relative sits down at the table and asks: How did the perished order us to live?) Then, of the men who entered, **one man** starts speaking: ...’

- Referent identifiable by anaphora
- Short referential distance
- Topic shift
- Overtly expressed superset

21st century Mari: Topic shift

- (6) *Moləžo ala-kuš, ala kajen pətenut, ala kolen*
other.ŽE somewhere maybe go.CVB end.up.PST.3PL maybe die.CVB
pətenut, uke, i ala-kušto ulət, nəgömat
end.up.PST.3PL no and somewhere be.3PL nothing.ACC.ADD
om šinče. Marijže gən...
NEG.1SG know.CNG Mari.ŽE if

‘(But there are no Russians here. Well in Toryal there is a Lida.) **The others**, maybe they went somewhere or died, are somewhere, I do not know anyone. As for the **Mari**... (well there is my little brother’s son and my uncle’s grandchildren).’

Contrastive Topic

- (7) *Maksəmže vet kugu ələ, memnanže izi ələ.*
Maksim.ŽE see big PST 2PL.GEN.ŽE small PST
‘Maksim, you know, was big, **our** (boy) was small.’

Partitive-like function

- (8) – *Nu, dva doma bylo.* – *Nu ik... ik pörtšəm vara ergəže*
PTCL one one house.ŽE.ACC then son.PX3SG
nəŋgajen, vara vütam nəŋgajen ...
take.PST.3SG then shed.ACC take.PST.3SG

‘– Well, there were two houses. – Well **one** of the **houses** his son took, then he took the cowshed ...’

Bridging identifiability

- (9) *Uke, uke, uke, jalet pəteńak čisti, čisti nima*
no no no village.px2sg completely empty empty nothing
uke. Šükšü pörtəštəžö rəvəž ilat, maneš.
NEGEXIST ramshackle house.INE.ŽE fox live.3PL apparently

‘No, no, no, your village is completely empty, there is nothing at all. In the **ramshackle houses**, foxes live, apparently.’

Question Enimitive(?), attachment to verb

- (10) – A *molan joletše tüŋalənže?*
 but why leg.PX2SG.ŽE start.PST.3SG.ŽE

‘(– I have had problems with my leg for 40 years.) – But why did your leg even start (hurting)?’

Correction focus?

- (11) – *Təštəže?* – *Təšte oǵal, Nureŋerəštəže.*
here.ŽE here NEG Nureŋer.INE.ŽE
‘– Here? – Not here, but in Nureŋer.’

Some numbers

Location	Total	Nominal Host	Topic shift / CT
Azjal	22	20	20
Pulanur	19	17	18
Sernur	16	14	14
Saryj Torjal	31	21	18

- More combinatorial freedom in new texts (e.g. verbs + stacking on other Px)
- New functions in new texts (question enimitive, correction focus?)
- But: “old” functions are still present

Russian *že*

- Question enimitive: “the content of the question is presented by the speaker as expected or easily deducible from the context” (Panov 2020: 16)

- (12) (Everyone is expecting Vasja to be already present.)

Gde že Vasja?

where *žE* Vasja

‘Well, where is Vasja?’

- (13) – *A molan joletše tüŋalənže?*

but why leg.PX2SG.*žE* start.PST.3SG.*žE*

‘(– I have had problems with my leg for 40 years.) – But why did your leg even start (hurting)?’

Summary

- Three main functions of ŽE:
 - ① Shift topic marker
 - ② Partitive-like marking
 - ③ Enimitive or other discourse connecting marking
- Variation:
 - Frequency and number of usage contexts increases from east to west in old data, and from old to new data – seemingly more innovative in the west, more conservative in the east
 - In newer data: more discourse connector usage, some more variable placement while at the same time preserving old functions
- The old eastern data appears to exhibit the older functions
- Diatopic and diachronic facts suggest innovation through contact with Russian

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Afterthought

- Contrast or shift topic possible in postverbal position, too

- (45) [“What about your lost cat — did you look for it?”]

Da, i mu-ən lukt-ən-am, pəras-em-əm / **pəras-em-žə-m.*
yes and find-CVB lead.out-PST2-1SG cat-PX1SG-ACC cat-PX1SG-ŽE-ACC

‘Yes, and I did find (him), **my cat**.’ (elicited)

- (46) [“What about your lost cat and dog — did you look for them?”]

Da, i mu-ən lukt-ən-am, pəras-em-əm / *pəras-em-žə-m.*
yes and find-CVB lead.out-PST2-1SG cat-PX1SG-ACC cat-PX1SG-ŽE-ACC

A pij-em-əm eše mu-ən om-əl.
but dog-PX1SG-ACC yet find-CVB NEG.1SG-be

‘Yes, and I did find (him), **my cat**. But **my dog** I have not found yet.’ (elicited)

Hirvonen (2024: 112)

- (14) Tušnal (Ramstedt 1902: 183)

βara kuδa kaješ, škežə ak-kaj maraža
then house be.visible.3SG self.PX3SG NEG.3SG-be.visible.CNG man.ŽE

‘(The man takes the magic coat off the stairs.) Now the house is visible,
but he himself is not visible, **the man.**’

Combination with other PX

- (15) Otjukovo (NW) (Beke 1957: 12)

Ońís, koš tüdǘm pokten koltânet? βet tǎńǎn ɛryǎ-ts-šǎ.

Ońís where him expel send PTCL your son-PX2SG-ŽE

‘Ońís, where do you want to expel him? He is **your son, (after all).**’

- (16) Otjukovo (NW), (Beke 1957: 7)

ǎťǎ-m-žǎ mǎńǎm ak jaraltǎ üľü. ǎβǎ-m-žǎ peš

father-PX1SG-ŽE me not love PST mother-PX1SG-ŽE very

jaralta üľü mǎńǎm ...

loves PST me

‘**My father** did not love me. **My mother (however)** loved me very much’