

# Methods for approaching variation: partitives and beyond

Partitivity in Uralic Languages:  
Subset marking  
via possessive agreement

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# Background

- In this talk, partitive constructions are identified on the basis of Koptjevskaja-Tamm's semantic-typological definition 'part/amount of N' relationship (Koptjevskaja-Tamm 2001), in more formal terms:  $A \subseteq B$ .
- The relationship between A and B is represented by two DPs, DP1 is the subset, DP2 is the superset (1a) & (1b) (Falco & Zamparelli 2019).

# Background 2

(1) a.  $[\text{DP}_1 \text{ } [\text{NP}_1 \text{ } [\text{pp} \text{ } [\text{DP}_2 \text{ } [\text{NP}_2 \text{ } ]]]]]]$

(Falco & Zamparelli 2019:11)

b.  $[\text{DP}_1 \text{ ten } [\text{NP}_1 \text{ (girls)}] [\text{pp} \text{ of } [\text{DP}_2 \text{ the } [\text{NP}_2 \text{ girls}]]]]]$

NP1 can be silent, but interpretable at the syntax-semantics interface.

# Cases to mark partitivity

- In Uralic languages the relationship is encoded on the superset via case marking (elative, ablative or partitive, etc.) or adpositions (meaning elative, ablative or partitive, etc.) (2).
- In the Finnic group this is the only option. In the Volgaic and Ugric branches there is another alternative in limited constructions.

# Hungarian

- (2) a. [...] *Megevett*                    *hármát*                    *az*                    *almákból.*  
pref.eat.PST.3RD                    three.ACC                    the                    apple.PL.ELA  
‘He ate three of the apples.’
- b. [...] *Kettő*                    *a*                    *diákok*                    *közül*  
two[NOM]                    the                    student.PL                    out\_of  
*hazakísért.*  
home\_accompany.PST.3SG  
‘[Ten students took the exam.] Two of them accompanied me home.’

# Finnish and Estonian

(2) c. [...] *Kaksi he-istä hylättiin.*

two[NOM] they-PL.ELA reject.PASS.PST

‘[Ten students took the exam.] Two of them failed.’

d. [...] *Kaks ne-ist said hea hinde.*

two[NOM] they-PL.ELA get.PST.3PL good.GEN grade.GEN

‘[Ten students took the exam.] Two of them / two of these students got a good grade.’

# Mari

(2) e. *kum*            *eryy* *yyč*            *koktyt-šy-m*            *saldatlan*  
         three            son **from**            two-PX.3SG-ACC            soldier.DAT  
  
*puem*  
give.PRS.1SG

'I'll send two sons out of the three to the army' (BG 1990: 43)

# Superset marking via possessive agreement (Px)

- We discuss constructions in which the relationship between B and A, i.e., between the superset and the subset—in syntactic terms: between DP2 and DP1—is encoded via possessive agreement (Px) by the subset, a quantifier, with the superset.
- In other words, **there is explicit morphological marking of number and person on the subset, which agrees in number and person with the superset.**
- Erzya, Mari, Mansi, and Hungarian have similar strategies to inflect quantifiers, but the structures may differ in several respects.

# Singular agreement: Mari 1

- (3) a. [...] *Kokyt-šo* *dene* *kutyr-en-em.*  
two-**Px.3SG**[NOM] with peak-PST2.1SG  
'[Ten students took the exam.] I spoke with two of them.'  
(Elena Vedernikova, p. c.)
- b. *Kum* *uškal-yšte* *ikty-žy-m* *užal-em.*  
three cow-INE one-**Px.3SG**-ACC sell-PRS.1SG  
'I will sell one of (the) three cows.' (Bereczki 1990: 38)

# Mari 2

- (3) c. [...] \*Kokyty-št-lan kugu kol  
two-Px.3PL-DAT large fish  
vereštyn.  
fall\_prej.PST.3SG  
‘[Ten men went fishing.]  
Two (of them) caught large fish.’  
(Elena Vedernikova p.c.)



# Plural agreement 1: Hungarian

- (4) a. *Kettő-jük* *hazakísért.*  
two-**Px.3PL**[ NOM] home\_accompany.PST.3SG  
'[Ten students took the exam.] Two of them accompanied me home.'
- b. *Melyiküket* *láttad* *utoljára?*  
which\_person-**Px.3PL**.ACC see.PST.2S>3P last\_time.  
'Which person did you see last time?'

## Plural agreement 2: Erzya

- (5) *ves'eme-st*  
all-**Px.3PL**  
'all of them' (Rueter 2010: 153)

# Plural agreement 3: Mansi

(6) a. [...] *akw pāla-nəl kapitalizm sistēma, mōt pāla-nəl*  
one half-**Px.3PL** capitalism system other half-**Px.3PL**  
*socializm sistēma.*  
socialism system

‘[The Great October Revolution has divided the countries of the world in two] one half of them is the socialist system, and the other half the capitalist system.’ (Rombandeeva & Vakhruševa 1989:89)

# Dual agreement: Mansi

- (6) b. *t'it*    *sūmjax*    *ūnlēy,*    *akwa-te*  
two    barn    sit.PRS.3DU    one-**PX.3SG**
- jil'pi*    *sūmjax,*    *akwa-te*    *pēs*    *sūmjax*  
new    barn    one-**PX.3SG**    old    barn
- ‘There are two barns standing, one of them is a new barn,  
the other one is an old barn’ (R: 30)
- c. *akw xumi-tēn*    *lāwi:*    *ēj, ...*  
one man-**PX.3DU**    say.PRS.3SG:    hey ...
- ‘One of the (two) men says: Hey ...’ (R: 147)

# Px agreement

- What are the features encoded in Px on DP1 in these languages?
  - In Mari, the subset DP1 usually exhibits singular agreement, whereas in Erzya and Hungarian, subset-DPs are in plural.
  - In Mansi, the subset-DP is in plural if the superset is in plural.
  - If the superset is in dual, the subset agrees with it either in singular or in dual.



# Overt vs covert superset: Mari

- (7) b. *kum*    *eryy*    *γyč*                      *koktyt-šy-m*    *salδatlan*  
three    son    from                      two-**Px.3SG**-ACC soldier.DAT  
*puem*  
give.PRS.1SG  
'I'll send two sons out of the three to the army.'  
(Bereczki 1990: 43)

# The nature of the superset

In these constructions, the **superset DP2 can be overt or must be covert**.

- a. In Mari the superset can be optionally overt, and the representations associated with the two structures, see the contrast between (8c) and (8b).
- b. In Hungarian, once the subset is marked with Px, the superset DP2 cannot be overtly present, see the contrast illustrated in the options in Hungarian. In DPs with no overt superset DP2, it is assumed that there is a set of phonologically silent features (pro) the subset agrees with (8e).

# Typology

- From typological perspective, there are two types of constructions that can be distinguished.
- In structures (8a-b), DP1 and DP2 are related via cases or adpositions, whereas in structures (8c-f) DP1 can be marked with Px.
- These languages are further divided into two groups, namely the superset can be covert or overt or the Px agrees in singular, in plural, or in dual with the superset.

# Representations

- (8) a.  $[_{DP1} \text{ three } [_{NP} \text{ (freshmen) } [_{pp} \text{ of } [_{DP2} \text{ the}[_{NP} \text{ students}]]]]]$  (Falco & Zamparelli 2019:11) **English**
- b.  $[_{DP1} \quad [_{NumP} \text{ two } [_{NP} \text{ (student) } \quad [_{pp/KP} \text{ -ELA/-out\_of } \quad [_{DP2} \quad [_{NP} \text{ them}]]]]]]]$   
**Hungarian , Finnish, Estonian , Mari, and Mansi**
- c.  $[_{DP1} \quad [_{AgrP} \quad \mathbf{3SG}_i \quad [_{NumP} \text{ one } [_{NP} \text{ (cow)}( [_{pp/KP} \text{ -ine}[_{DP2} \text{ three}[_{NP} \text{ cow}_i]]]]]]]]]$  **Mari**
- d.  $[_{DP1} \quad [_{AgrP} \quad \mathbf{3SG}_i \quad [_{NumP} \text{ one } [_{NP} \text{ (cow) } [_{DP2} \quad [_{NP} \text{ pro}_i \quad i]]]]]]]$  **Mari**
- e.  $[_{DP1} \quad [_{AgrP} \quad \mathbf{3PL}_i \quad [_{NumP} \text{ two } [_{NP} \text{ (student) } \quad [_{DP2} \quad \quad [_{NP} \text{ pro}_i \quad ]]]]]]]]$  **Hungarian , Mansi , Erzya**
- f.  $[_{DP1} \quad [_{AgrP} \quad \mathbf{3DU/SG}_i \quad [_{NumP} \text{ two } [_{NP} \text{ (student) } \quad [_{DP2} \quad \quad [_{NP} \text{ pro}_i \text{ (DU)}]]]]]]]$  **Mansi**

# Conclusion on methodology

To find what fits under the term “partitive” and what is understood by it in linguistic vernaculars, we have proposed a methodology that consists of

- typological and
- formal approaches
- as well as traditional Uralist methods, and
- elicitation.

# References

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