

Stepan Mikhailov

HSE University, Moscow

NO STORTO EFFECT OF THE ENGLISH/ITALIAN TYPE IN NORTHERN KHANTY POSSESSIVES¹

Possessive constructions are well-known to admit at least two types of interpretations ([Partee 1983/2011], a. o.): (i) prototypical possessive interpretations (ownership, part-whole, etc.) and (ii) **free possessive interpretations** (unrestricted, context-dependent; FPIs). Gianluca Storto [Storto 2005] has shown that FPIs observe a non-trivial constraint that I propose to call the **Storto Effect** (1), exemplified with Italian data in (2).

(1) **STORTO EFFECT**

FPIs are only available in definite noun phrases (NPs) [Storto 2005]

(2) [“Yesterday, Gianni and Paolo were attacked by two groups of dogs.”]

...sfortunamente i / #alcuni cani di Gianni

unfortunately the / #some dogs of Gianni

avevano la rabbia.

had the rabies

(adapted from [Storto 2005])

Apart from Storto’s work, there appears to have been no inquiry either into the reasons for the Storto Effect or into its existence in languages besides English and Italian. The primary concern of my investigation thus has been to ascertain whether the Northern Khanty possessive constructions (possessives) also exhibit the Storto Effect. This is particularly relevant because Northern Khanty has possessive

¹ The study was implemented in the framework of the Basic Research Program at the National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE University) in 2022 as part of the project “Languages of Russia: morphosyntax and its interaction with other modules”.

suffixes (3) that are used much more extensively than Standard Average European-type possessives [Fraurud 2001; Nikolaeva 2003].

(3) KAZYM DIALECT OF NORTHERN KHANTY

năŋ kăt'-en moś-λ

you.SG cat-POSS.2SG purr-NPST[3SG]

‘Your cat is purring.’ (own fieldwork data here and below)

[Nikolaeva 2003] has demonstrated that possessives in Northern Khanty are frequently used to mark **familiar referents** that stand in a **free possessive relation**, to borrow GS’s term, to another referent. This might be due to the two referents being associated in the current speech setting, e. g., because of physical proximity (4), or if the two had prior interactions in a narrative (5).² In both examples, the possessive is **obligatory** and its omission triggers an **anti-uniqueness/familiarity implication** (4), similar to European definite articles [Heim 2019].

(4) {A friend is over at the speaker’s place. There’s one cup on the table.}

a. *an-en mij-e*

cup-POSS.2SG give-IMP.SG>SG

‘Give me the cup.’

b. #*an mij-a*³

cup give-IMP[SG]

‘#Give me a cup.’

(5) {“I found somebody’s ID in the street. I went to the town administration. Met a friend there and talked to her for some time.”}

a. *nem nepek-εm suvet-ən χăj-s-εm*

name paper-POSS.1SG council-LOC leave-PST-1SG>SG

‘[Then] I left the ID at the administration. {Let them find the owner.}’

² Nikolaeva discussed the data of the Obdorsk dialect, while my data come from fieldwork with speakers of the Kazym dialect. Although there are significant differences between the possessives of the two dialects, Nikolaeva’s observations hold for both.

³ The presence of objective conjugation correlates with object definiteness, which has been controlled for during elicitation of this and further examples. Fuller details of conjugation choice need not concern us here.

- b. #*nem nepək* [...]

name paper [...]

Intended: ...the ID...

Here, however, Storto Effect data are not straightforward. While there are non-definite determiners that bar FPIs as predicted (6), most determiners admit free possessives and some even require them (7).

- (6) *mułsər an-en mij-a*

some.EN cup-POSS.2SG give-IMP[SG]

Context 1: I ask for one of addressee’s cups ⇒ OK

Context 2: as in (4), but several cups are on the table ⇒

#Give me any cup.⁴

- (7) {As in (4), but several cups are on the table.}

mätta an-#(en) mij-e

some.PS.SG cup-POSS.2SG give-IMP.SG>SG

‘Give me some cup {from these}’.

One might hope that (7) in fact involves a partitive-like structure “[some.SG ~~N~~ of cup-POSS.2SG]”, in which case it would not be a Storto Effect violation since *mätta* would not be a part of the free possessive-marked NP.

This hypothesis, however, makes a false prediction. In a partitive structure of this kind adding a demonstrative to *an-en* should be possible, as in the English case *one of these cups*. As (8) shows, the predicted order is ruled out. Instead, the demonstrative must be preposed and the partitive postposition *ewəłt* ‘from’ must be added.

- (8) {Same as (7).}

*təm mätta / *mätta təm an-en ewəłt*

this some.PS.SG / some.PS.SG this cup-POSS.2SG from

mij-e

give-IMP.SG>SG

‘Give me some cup from these.’

In the talk, I will discuss further determiners, as well as attempt to make sense of the astounding construction in (8).

⁴ The unmarked form *an* ‘cup’ must be used instead.

Abbreviations

1, 2, 3 — 1, 2, 3 person; IMP — imperative; LOC — locative; (N)PST — (non-)past; POSS — possessive; SG — singular; SG>SG — singular subject acting on singular object; some.PS.SG — partitive-specific singular determiner; some.EN — epistemically nonspecific determiner [Farkas, Brasoveanu 2019].

References

- Farkas, Brasoveanu 2019 — D. Farkas, A. Brasoveanu. Kinds of (Non)Specificity // D. Gutzmann, L. Matthewson, C. Meier, H. Rullmann, Th. E. Zimmermann (eds.). *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Semantics*. 2019. Published online: <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118788516.sem037>
- Fraurud 2001 — K. Fraurud. Possessives with extensive use: A source of definite articles? // I. Baron, M. Herslund, F. Sørensen (eds.). *Dimensions of possession*. (Typological Studies in Language 47). Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2001. P. 243–268.
- Heim 2019 — I. Heim. Definiteness and indefiniteness // P. Portner, K. von Stechow, C. Maienborn (eds.). *Semantics: Noun Phrases and Verb Phrases*. Berlin; Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2019. P. 33–69.
- Nikolaeva 2003 — I. Nikolaeva. Possessive affixes in the pragmatic structuring of the utterance: Evidence from Uralic // P. Suihkonen, B. Comrie, S. A. Maksimov (eds.). *International Symposium on Deictic Systems and Quantification in Languages Spoken in Europe и North and Central Asia*. Collection of papers. Udmurt State University, Izhevsk, Udmurt Republic, Russia, May 21–24, 2001. Izhevsk: Udmurt State University, 2003. P. 130–145.
- Partee 1983/2011 — B. H. Partee. Uniformity vs. versatility: the Genitive, a case study // J. van Benthem, A. ter Meulen (eds.). *The Handbook of Logic and Language*. Dordrecht: Elsevier, 1983. P. 464–470.
- Storto 2005 — G. Storto. Possessives in context // J.-Y. Kim, Yu. A. Lander, B. H. Partee (eds.). *Possessives and beyond: Semantics and syntax*. Amherst, MA: GSLA Publications, 2005. P. 59–86.