
From Possessive Suffix to Affective Demonstrative Suffix in Hungarian: a Grammaticalization Analysis

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The non-possessive uses of possessive morphology in Uralic languages have been a topic of intense debate. In my talk, I will focus on Hungarian, where the third person singular possessedness suffix (POSS.3SG) can be used in a negative emphatic demonstrative function:

- (1) *a hülyé-je*
the idiot-POSS.3SG
i. 'his/her/its idiot'
ii. 'that total idiot'

I claim that this suffix is an affective demonstrative suffix, grammaticalized from a full-fledged possessive construction of the form *a világ hülyéje* (the world stupid-POSS.3SG): lit. 'the world's stupid', meaning: 'the biggest idiot in the world'. I will reconstruct this process using corpora and show that this grammaticalization pathway is based on a set-element relationship which is often expressed by possessive constructions cross-linguistically, and facilitated by the availability of silent *pro* possessors and the lack of gender agreement on the possessive suffix. Since Uralic languages in general have these parameters, I will argue that this grammaticalization pathway should be regarded as one of the possible sources of the demonstrative (and definiteness marking) uses of POSS.3SG suffixes in Uralic languages.

References: • Nikolaeva, I. (2003): Possessive affixes in the pragmatic structuring of the utterance: evidence from Uralic. In: Proceedings of the International Symposium on Deictic Systems and Quantification. 130–145. • Lakoff, R. (1974): Remarks on this and that. CLS 10. 345–356. • Liberman, M. (2008): Affective demonstratives. Language Log 674.