

From Possessive Suffix to Affective Demonstrative Suffix in Hungarian

Tamás Halm

Research Institute for Linguistics (Budapest)

Abstract

The problem: 3SG possessedness suffix with non-possessive deictic function, confined to strongly negative evaluations: *a hülyéje!* 'the stupid-POSS.3SG 'that total idiot'.

Claims:

- "poss.3SG" above is an affective (or recognitional) demonstrative suffix (Lakoff 1974, Liberman 2008)
- grammaticalized from a full possessive construction *a világ hülyéje* 'the world stupid-POSS.3SG, lit. 'the stupid one of the world', meaning: 'the biggest idiot in the world'
- driven by feature economy (von Gelderen 2011) and the semanticization of originally pragmatically inferred information (Eckardt 2006)
- this POSS.3SG→DEM pathway may partially explain why POSS.3SG suffixes are extensively used in other Uralic languages as demonstratives or definiteness markers (Nikolaeva 2003)

The Problem

- (1) *a hülyé-je*
the stupid-POSS.3SG
i. 'his/her/its stupid one' (with silent *pro* possessor)
ii. 'that total idiot'
- (2) *A hülyé-je robotpilótát tákolt a Volkswagen-jé-be.*
the stupid-POSS.3SG autopilot:ACC fabricated the Volkswagen-POSS.3SG-ILL
'That total idiot built an autopilot into his Volkswagen.'

Description:

- denotes an individual that is salient in the discourse along the property denoted by the adjective which carries the possessive suffix
- completely productive, but limited to animates and to emphatic and negative (or ironic) evaluations: **az okos-a* 'the clever-POSS.3SG 'that genius'
- discourse function: deictic anchoring to physical context ('that idiot over there') or discourse ('that idiot we've been talking about'): immediate situation use and direct anaphoric use of demonstratives (Hawkins 1978)
- obligatorily definite (obligatory cooccurrence with definite article, note that Hungarian is a double definite language, cf. Egedi 2013)
- patterns with demonstratives on syntactic tests
- displays hallmarks of affective demonstrative usage: evaluative predication, speaker-hearer solidarity, familiarity and exclamation (Lakoff 1974, Himmelmann 1997, Liberman 2008, Potts and Schwarz 2010)

Previous research

- noted descriptively but no formal or informal analysis
- partitive POSS.3SG construction analyzed by É. Kiss (to appear) as grammaticalization
- most authors claim that the non-possessive use of possessive morphology in Uralic is not the result of grammaticalization but an inherent feature of these languages (Fraurud 2001, Nikolaeva 2003, Gerland 2014, Janda 2015).

Proposal

1. Description of grammaticalization

1.1 Starting point: bona fide possessive construction (attested in 13th C)

- (3) *a falu hülyé-je*
the village stupid-POSS.3SG
'the stupidest person in the village'
 $\max_{\text{stupid}}(\text{village}) = \alpha. \forall y (y \in \text{village} \rightarrow y \leq_{\text{stupid}} \alpha)$

(Cf. English: 'the pretty one of/in the family')

Proposal

- (4) *a világ hülyé-je*
the world stupid-POSS.3SG
'the stupidest person in the world', pragmatic inference: 'saliently stupid'

1.2 Intermediate stage: silent *pro* possessor

- (5) *a pro hülyé-je*
the pro stupid-POSS.3SG
silent *pro* interpreted as 'world' due to default recovery mechanism
'reconstruct to broadest contextually available possessor' (see below)
'the stupidest person in the world', pragmatic inference: 'saliently stupid'

1.3 Reinterpretation: no possessor, no possessive structure (from early 19th C):

- (6) *a hülyé-je*
the stupid-POSS.3SG=NEGATIVE AFFECTIVE DEMONSTRATIVE SUFFIX
'that total idiot'

2. Parameters of grammaticalization

- loss of original function and acquisition of new function
- structural simplification: [DP a [AgrP pro [Agr \emptyset [NumP -i [PossP -je [NP hülye]]]]]] → [DP a [NumP -i [DemP -je [NP hülye]]]]
- reduction of computational complexity: no need to run default silent possessor recovery mechanism
- semantic bleaching (but also reinforcement): see below
- loss of irregular morphology: *ökör* 'ox', *ökr-e* 'his ox' vs. *ökör-je* 'that total fool'; emergence of regular plural: *hülyé-jé-k* instead of *hülyé-i* ('those idiots')

3. Analysis of grammaticalization

3.1 Feature economy (von Gelderen 2011):

- (7)

| | | | | | |
|--------------|--------------|------------|--------------------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| <i>a pro</i> | <i>hülye</i> | <i>-je</i> | <i>-\emptyset</i> | <i>-></i> | <i>a hülye je</i> |
| [u-poss] | [i-poss] | [u-ps=3] | | | [i-def=+] |
| [i-ps=3] | [i-def=+] | [u-#=sg] | | | [i-loc] |
| [i-#=sg] | [i-loc] | | | | |

Remarks:

- POSS head [+def]: standard assumption in Hungarian (proven by DOM etc.)
- POSS head with deictic features: cf. von Gelderen (2011), Wood (2007)
- POSS.AGR morpheme is silent in 3SG (cf. Bartos 1999)

3.2 Semanticization of originally pragmatically inferred information (Eckardt 2006, cf. Hopper and Traugott 1993, Levinson 2000):

- (8) *a (világ) hülyé-je*: 'the maximally stupid person'
inferred: 'a saliently stupid person'
a hülyé-je: 'a saliently stupid person'

3.3 Crucial overlap which made reinterpretation possible: two ways of encoding that the set over which maximum extraction operates is the whole relevant context:

- possession by 'world' possessor: 'the idiot of the world'
- [+deictic], [+definite determiner] (pointing out in the context of physical / discourse world): 'that idiot'
- these essentially overlap in the abstract sense that 'world' is none other than the broadest relevant context

3.4 Additional remarks

- limitation to negatives: analogy of swearword construction: *a szentség-i-t!* 'the sacrament-POSS.3SG-ACC (lit. 'its sacraments')
- negative-positive (distal-proximal) division of labour (Potts and Schwarz 2010) impeded by vowel harmony (*-je* vs. *-ja*)
- crucial: silent *pro* possessors, lack of gender agreement → typical in Uralic
- possible chain for POSS.3SG reinterpretation in Uralic: POSS → DEM → DEF
- default possessor recovery mechanism in partitives (É. Kiss to appear): *a pro zöld-je* (lit. 'its green', meaning: 'the pieces which are unripe') reconstructed based on contextual knowledge: *a gyümölcs zöldje* 'the unripe pieces of fruit' or *a körte zöldje* 'the unripe pieces of pear'

Contact

Tamás Halm
Research Institute for Linguistics
(Budapest)
Email: halmt@nytud.hu
Website: www.nytud.hu/depts/tlp/halm/
Phone: +36302141385

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank Erika Asztalos, Ágnes Bende-Farkas, Éva Dékány, Barbara Egedi, Veronika Hegedűs, Katalin É. Kiss and Marcel den Dikken for their helpful comments and advice. My research was carried out in the framework of project 112057 of OTKA, the Hungarian National Scientific Research Foundation.

References

- Bartos, Huba. 1999. *Morfoszintaxis és interpretáció. A magyar inflexió jelenségek szintaktikai háttere.*
Eckardt, Regine. 2006. *Meaning change in grammaticalization: an enquiry into semantic reanalysis.* OUP.
Egedi, Barbara. 2013. *Grammatical encoding of referentiality in the history of Hungarian.*
É. Kiss, Katalin (ta). *Possessive agreement turned into a derivational suffix.*
É. Kiss, Katalin and Orsolya Tanczos (ta). *From possessor agreement to object marking: the grammaticalization path of the Udmurt -(j)ez suffix.*
Fraurud, Kari. 2001. *Possessives with extensive use: a source of definite articles?*
Gerland, Doris. 2014. *Definitely not possessed? Possessive suffixes with definiteness marking function.*
Hawkins, John A. 1978. *Definiteness and Indefiniteness.*
Hopper, Paul J. and Elizabeth C. Traugott. 1993. *Grammaticalization.*
Himmelmann, Nikolaus. 1997. *Deiktikon, Artikel, Nominalphrase: Zur Emergenz syntaktischer Struktur.*
Janda, Gwen Eva. 2015. *Northern Mansi possessive suffixes in non-possessive function.*
Lakoff, Robin. 1974. *Remarks on this and that.*
Liberman, Mark. 2008. *Affective demonstratives.*
Levinson, Stephen C. 2000. *Presumptive Meanings.*
Nikolaeva, Irina. 2003. *Possessive affixes in the pragmatic structuring of the utterance: evidence from Uralic.*
Westerstahl, Dag. 1985. *Determiners and context sets.*
Wood, Johanna. 2007. *Demonstratives and Possessives: From Old English to Present-Day English.*