

# Possessivity in Kildin Saami

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This research examines the concept of head marking possessivity, which refers to a particular type of morphology that can appear on a noun when it has an explicit or implicit possessor. The term “possessivity” is commonly used to describe markers that distinguish the  $\phi$ -features of the possessor, such as their person, number, or gender. Thus, possessivity is a type of indexing in terms of [Haspelmath \(2013\)](#). A typical example of a possessive construction is shown in example (1) from Kildin Saami.

- (1) mun v'iil'l'j-an puud'e  
I.GEN brother-POSS.1SG.NOM.SG came  
'My brother came.'

This study will primarily focus on data from the Saami languages, specifically drawing upon grammar descriptions of various Saami languages such as [Kuruch et al. \(1985\)](#); [Koponen et al. \(2022\)](#); [Feist \(2010\)](#); [Rießler \(2022\)](#); [Aikio & Ylikoski \(2009\)](#) among others, as well as data collected during fieldwork with speakers of Kildin Saami. Kildin Saami only has around 100 speakers, most of whom reside in the Lovozersky district of Murmansk Oblast in a single settlement known as Lovozero.

My study is centered around the ongoing process of language change, specifically language loss. As Kildin Saami is classified as an endangered language and is no longer utilized in everyday communication, instances of attrition may be observed.

According to the possessive paradigms presented in [Kuruch et al. \(1985\)](#) and [Kert \(1971\)](#), there are three distinct possible person values. These scholars do not mention any variance between speakers. However, [Rießler \(2022\)](#) notes that “Kildin Saami has lost the regular possessive inflection of nouns. Remnants of the former possessive inflection are only found occasionally with kinship nouns”.

In my view, the assertion made by [Rießler \(2022\)](#) is not entirely accurate. While it is true that the possessive declension is nearly extinct for nouns (as is the case in other Saami languages), it had been grammaticalized in reflexives and reciprocals prior to its loss. Therefore, possessive markers are obligatory in these structures, as demonstrated in example (2).

- (2) a. nizan ujjn-av kaan'n'c' kaan'n'c'-(es')  
women see-NPST.3PL friend friend-POSS3  
'The women see each other.'
- b. par'ŕ'š'a oaffk iž'-(es')  
boy scolds self-POSS3  
'The boy scolds himself.'

Given that reflexives and reciprocals cannot be formed without the use of possessive morphology, yet possessive morphology is not commonly employed in the language, it is understandable that this presents an intriguing area of study.

During my presentation, I will showcase the variations that arise in the formation of reflexives, and then compare this variability with the formation of standard possessive forms. As previously noted, conventional possessive forms are infrequent and only appear sporadically. Nevertheless, these sporadic instances align with the diversity found in reflexive pronoun formation.

Speakers of Kildin Saami may be classified into two distinct groups based on the number of person values they differentiate in the possessive declension. One group of speakers differentiates between all three values, while the other group distinguishes only between two. In the latter group, first and second person values are always combined and expressed using a single marker, which consistently appears as *-ant*, the ex-marker for second person possessivity. This differentiation is illustrated in (3), with different colors representing each group of speakers.

- (3) a. munn iž'-**an**/**-ant** šobbš-a  
 I self-**POSS1**/**POSS1\_2** love-NPST1SG  
 'I like myself.'
- b. toonn soagg-ex kul' iiž-s'-**ant**/**ant**  
 you.SG catch-PST.2SG fish.ACC self-**POSS2**/**POSS1\_2**  
 'Did you fish for yourself?'

During my presentation, I will cover the following topics:

- i An exploration of the remaining components of the possessivity system in Kildin Saami.
- ii A potential explanation for how the possessivity system evolved into its current state.
- iii An emphasis on the notion that even what may appear to be language attrition can function as a cohesive system.

## Glossary

1	first person	NPST	non-past
2	second person	PL	plural
3	third person	POSS	possessive
ACC	accusative	PST	past
GEN	genitive	SG	singular
NOM	nominative		

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