

# Towards a semantic typology of specific determiners\*

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## Abstract

This paper investigates properties of a class of determiners which can be loosely labelled specific in that their distribution falls in between maximally-quantifying definite determiners and indefinites which only contribute existential quantification. Based on a sample which includes data from Buryat, Komi, Mari, Mordvin, and Turkish, I propose that suffixal determiners form a semantically natural class in that their distribution can be modelled by means of a relational component in the semantics of the determiners which relates the denotation of the noun to an antecedent. I derive the observed distributional differences between languages from the range of values available for the interpretation of this component. In particular, whether a relation of identity falls within the range of values has consequences for whether a suffixal determiner triggers existence presupposition, which, in turn, has consequences both for the interpretation of the DP in question and for the inter-paradigm competition in a language.

## 1 Introduction

Determiners, understood as morphemes relating the denotation of a noun phrase to the more general truth- and felicity conditions, can be divided into two large classes on semantic grounds with respect to whether they trigger maximal quantification of the kind associated with Germanic definite determiners in the Sharvy-based developments of the Fregean/Russellian tradition.<sup>1</sup>

Maximally quantifying determiners, in a morphologically free-standing or affixal form, are found, for instance, in Romance, Germanic, Semitic, Albanian, and Greek. Leaving this class aside, this paper focuses on non-maximally quantifying determiners which relate the denotation of the noun to some contextually specified individual using an umbrella term of specificity, to be defined more precisely in the course of the discussion. Using a classic example from the seminal paper of Enç (1991) to set the stage, consider (1) where the use of the marker *-ı* implies that the denotation of *iki kız-ı* “two girls” is a subset of the group of individuals which verifies the truthfulness of the preceding sentence with the expression *birkaç çocuk*. In the absence of the marker, an inference arises that these are some unrelated girls.<sup>2</sup>

- (1) Oda-m-a      birkaç çocuk gir-di.      İki kız-ı      tanı-yor-du-m.  
room-1SG-DAT several child enter-PST.3SG two girl-ACC know-IMPF-PST-1SG  
“Several children entered my room. I knew two (of the) girls.” [Turkish], Enç (1991, 6)

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<sup>1</sup>As in most cases of quantification in natural language, maximality normally has to be relativized to a contextually relevant domain (e.g. von Stechow 1994).

<sup>2</sup>In the examples here and henceforth I use traditional glosses, to avoid descriptive confusion.

Example in (2) shows a parallel case from Persian.

- (2)   Dirooz   panj ta   sag did-am.    Emrooz yeki-shoon-o    did-am.  
       yesterday five   unit dog see.PST-1SG today   one-of-them-ACC see.pst-1SG  
       “Yesterday I saw five dogs. Today I saw one of them.” [PERSIAN]

Clearly, the notion of maximality is not appropriate to model the meaning contribution of such determiners. Determiners of similar kinds are known under different terms depending on a particular tradition and their morphological makeup: as (differential) accusative markers in Turkish (Turkic) and Persian (Iranian), as possessive markers in Mari (Finno-Ugric) and Buryat (Mongolian), as demonstrative or definite markers in Mordvin (Finno-Ugric).<sup>3</sup>

The goal of this paper is to show that despite different labels, it is productive to consider them a semantically natural class of morphemes, and that both semantic and pragmatic variation within this class can be captured with a single parameter, namely, the range of relations which can hold between individuals from the denotation of the noun phrase and some contextually specified (group of) individual.<sup>4</sup>

The next section focuses on the empirical patterns and in section 3 I propose a preliminary formalisation capturing attested semantic variation. In section 4 I probe into pragmatic properties of these determiners, which I then relate them to the semantic variation in section 5. In section 6 I offer brief conclusions.

## 2 Empirical patterns

As a preliminary descriptive device, I will use a notation from Enç (1991), proposed to capture the use of Turkish differential object markers. In (3),  $i$  and  $j$  are indices pointing to the referent of the NP in question and some other referent to which the former stands in a subset relation.

- (3)   Every  $[_{NP} \alpha]_{\langle ij \rangle}$  is interpreted as  $\alpha(x_i)$ :  
        $x_i \subseteq x_j$  if  $NP_{\langle ij \rangle}$  is plural  
        $\{x_i\} \subseteq x_j$  if  $NP_{\langle ij \rangle}$  is singular. Enç (1991, 7)

As will be shown below, languages differ with respect to what kind of relation can hold between the referents of  $i$  and  $j$ . Below, in addition to Turkish, considered here as a baseline case, I focus on the variation within the Finno-Ugric group to which I add data from Buryat, a Mongolian language, mostly based on original fieldwork. This sample seems to exploit nearly all possible pattern combinations and allows to draw a model of semantic typology for this family of determiners.

### 2.1 Turkish

The accusative marker in Turkish, in addition to the contexts featuring what can be called a proper superset antecedent, as in (1), also appears in contexts which provide an antecedent with which the intended referent of the DP in question can be identified, (4), as well as whenever a suitable antecedent is provided by a local, (5), and a global discourse situation, (5), to use the terms of Hawkins (1991).

<sup>3</sup>As will be shown below, the Mordvin labels are clear misnomers on the Fregean treatment of definites.

<sup>4</sup>Henceforth I will use the term antecedent as an informal shortcut for an individual/group of individuals which verify the use of an antecedent expression.

- (4) Oda-m-a bir kız gir-di. Kız-\*(**ı**) tanı-dı-m.  
 room-1SG-DAT a girl enter-pst.3sg girl-ACC recognize-PST-1SG  
 “A girl entered my room. A recognized the girl.” [TURKISH]
- (5) Kapı-\*(**ı**) kapat!  
 door-ACC close.IMP.2SG  
 “Close the door!” [TURKISH]
- (6) Güneş-\*(**i**) gör-dü-m.  
 sun-ACC see-PST-3SG  
 “I saw the sun.” [TURKISH]

Turkish also has a series of possessive suffixal determiners, which can only express properly possessive relations and in the object position combine with the accusative suffix, as in (7).

- (7) Deniz ev-in-i sat-acak.  
 Deniz house-3SG-ACC sell-FUT.3SG  
 “Deniz will sell his house.” [TURKISH]

## 2.2 Komi

A similar pattern is found in Komi (Finno-Ugric). As most other Finno-Ugric languages, Komi has a paradigm of possessive suffixes. These suffixes attach to a nominal or nominalized stem and encode person and number features of an implicit or explicit expression denoting an individual which stands in some sort of a contextually recoverable relation to elements from the denotation of the NP, as in (8) where the suffix encodes the features (3rd person singular) of the possessor.

- (8) Petra-lyn ponm-ys  
 Peter-GEN dog-3SG  
 “Peter’s dog” [Komi]<sup>5</sup>

In a number of Finno-Ugric, including Komi, the distribution of the possessive suffixes extends beyond contexts involving an entity-to-another-entity relation (i.e. possessive or genitival relations proper). For instance, a 3rd person singular person suffix appears in contexts parallel to the Turkish case with a proper superset antecedent in (1):

- (9) lavka teryt va-i-sny kuim pyzan. ton mi yti pyzan-#(se) n’eb-i-m.  
 store yesterday bring-PRT-3PL three table today we one table-3SG.ACC buy-PRT-1PL  
 “Yesterday they brought three tables to the store. Today we bought one table.” [Komi]

In (10) there is an antecedent identical to the intended referent (cf. Turkish (4)).<sup>6</sup>

- (10) me mun-i ul’iča kuz’a i ad’d’-il-i pon. ponm-\*(ys) kuč’-i-s uut-ny.  
 I walk-PRT street along and see-ITER-PRT dog dog-3SG start-PRT-3 bark-INF  
 “I was walking down the street and saw a dog. The dog started barking.” [Komi],  
 Kashkin (2008)

Finally, as in Turkish, in Komi a possessive determiner appears if the existence of a potential referent is established in the discourse situation, either local, (11), or global, (12).

<sup>5</sup>Komi data are from a Komi Izhem dialect spoken in Muzhi, Shuryshkary district, Yamalo-Nenets region, Russian Federation. Finno-Ugric and Buryat data are presented in transliterations (from Cyrillic) without capital letters.

<sup>6</sup>I use # and \* signs to distinguish sharp and mild infelicity respectively. The contrast is empirically noticeable in speakers’ judgements and, I suggest, has theoretical grounds, as discussed in section 5.

- (11) əbes-\*(se) s'ipt-i! (12) šond'-\*(ys) dzeb-s-i-s.  
 door-3SG.ACC close-IMP Sun-3SG dep-DETR-PRT-3SG  
 “Close the door!” [KOMI], Kashkin (2008) ‘The sun has set.’ [KOMI]

### 2.3 Buryat

In Buryat, the distribution of possessive suffixes covers properly possessive, superset, and identical antecedent contexts, illustrated in (13), (14), and (15) respectively.

- (13) ger-**en'** exε.  
 house-3SG big  
 “His house is big.” [BURYAT]<sup>7</sup>
- (14) bi gurban ajaga abaab. nəge ajag-ii#(-n') egεš-εde belegle-xε-b  
 I three cup bought one cup-CNT-3SG sister-DAT give-POT-1SG  
 “I bought three cups. One cup I will give to (my) sister.” [BURYAT]
- (15) manaj tosxondo šcne ger bar'-aa. ger(-**en'**) exε.  
 we village new house build-PRT.3SG house-3SG big  
 “In our village a new house was built. That house is big.” [BURYAT]

In the context of a potential referent available in the discourse but not picked up by a linguistic antecedent, the use of the suffixal determiner is infelicitous, (16).

- (16) xaxad hyni hara(#-n') gar-aa.  
 middle night moon-3SG come-PRT.3SG  
 “The moon came out in the middle of the night.” [BURYAT]

Buryat also has differential accusative markers. The latter are used in contexts of direct anaphora, proper superset antecedents, and referents whose existence is guaranteed by a non-linguistic context, as in (17), (18), and (19) respectively.

- (17) yster ujlε-εde bi noxoɣ xar-aa-b. munooder tere noxoɣ(-e) εdeεl-εε-b.  
 yesterday stree-DAT I god see-PRT-1SG today that dog-ACC feed-PRT-1SG  
 “Yesterday I saw a dog on the street. Today I fed that dog.” [BURYAT]
- (18) bi gurban ajaga abaab. nəge ajagy-e egεš-εde belegle-xε-b  
 I three cup bought one cup-ACC sister-DAT give-POT-1SG  
 “I bought three cups. One cup I will give to (my) sister.” [BURYAT]
- (19) munθθder xadaj-n dεεε bi nara-je xar-aa-b.  
 today mountain-GEN on I sun-ACC see-PRT-1SG  
 “I saw the sun above the mountains today.” [BURYAT]

### 2.4 Mari

Mari showcases yet another pattern in terms of the range of contexts in which a suffixal determiner can be used. Along with possessive uses, (20), the only other type of context licensing the use of bound determiners are those with a proper superset antecedent, as in (21).

<sup>7</sup>The Buryat data come Barguzin dialect of Buryat spoken in Baraghan, Buryat Republic, Russian Federation.

- (20) üdər-žö tud-əm sərəkt-ən.  
daughter-3SG he-ACC make.angry-PRT  
‘His daughter made him angry.’ [MARI]<sup>8</sup>
- (21) məj kum kniga-m nal-ən-am. ik kniga#(-ž)-əm Kost’a-lan pölekl-em.  
I three book-ACC buy-PRT-1SG one book-3SG-ACC Kost’a-DAT give-PRS.1SG  
‘I bought three books. I will give one of them to Kost’a.’ [MARI]

Contexts with anaphoric, (22), or situational identity, (23), are excluded in Mari:

- (22) Vəşja kniga-m nal-ən. Tač’e tudo (tide) kniga-(\*ž)-əm lud-eš.  
Vəşja book-ACC buy-NARR.3SG today he that book-(\*3SG)-ACC read-PRS.3SG  
‘Vəşja bought a book. Today he is reading that book.’ [MARI], Simonenko (2014)
- (23) Petər-e-za omsa-(\*žə)-m!  
close-IMP-2SG door-(\*3SG)-ACC  
‘Close the door!’ [MARI], Simonenko (2014)

## 2.5 Mordvin

Finally, a split pattern is found in Mordvin. Possessive determiners cover only properly possessive relations, (24), whereas a suffix a paradigm traditionally labelled “definite” or “demonstrative” and not marking person features appears in all the context where Turkish uses an accusative and Komi a 3rd person singular possessive determiner. (25) illustrates the proper superset antecedent case.

- (24) Maša n’ej-əz’ə son’ c’or-ənc.  
Masha meet-PST.3SGO.3SGS his son-3SG.GEN  
‘Masha met his son.’ [MORDVIN]<sup>9</sup>
- (25) Olə rama-s’ kolmə kniga-t. fke kniga#(-t’) son kaz-əz’ə  
Ol’a buy-PST.3SG three book-PL one book-DEF.SG.GEN she give-PST.3SGO.3SGS  
Kost’-ən’d’i.  
Kost’a-DAT  
‘Ol’a bought three books. She gave one book to Kost’a.’ [MORDVIN]

The term “definite” is a misnomer if we reserve it for the cases of iota- or maximal quantification (relativized to a domain): in (25) *fke kniga-t* cannot be sensibly construed as denoting a maximal individual with the property of being a book. This determiner can also be used in contexts with an anaphoric antecedent, (26) or a situationally accessible referent, (27).

- (26) mon ... n’ej-ən’ pin’ə, i pin’ə\*(-s’) uv-əma-n’.  
I ... see-PST.1SG dog and dog-DEF.SG bark-PST-1.O-SG.O.3SG.S  
‘I ... saw a dog, and the dog barked at me.’ [MORDVIN], Kashkin (Forthcoming)
- (27) t’ėči ši\*(-s’) valdəpt-i valctə.  
today sun-DEF.SG shine-NPST.3SG bright.EL  
‘Today the sun is shining brightly.’ [MORDVIN], Kashkin (Forthcoming)

<sup>8</sup>The Mari data are from a dialect of Meadow Mari spoken in Saryj Torjal, Republic Mari El, Russian Federation.

<sup>9</sup>Mordvin data are from a Moksha Mordvin dialect of Lesnoe Tsibaev, Temnikov region, Mordvin Republic, Russian Federation.

The patterns found in this micro-typological sample are summarized in Table 1 with an extension of Eng’s notation.

PATTERN		TUR	TUR OBJ	KOM	BUR	BUR OBJ	MAR	MOR	MOR “DEF”
A.	$x_i$ OWNED BY $x_j$	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
B-i.	$x_i \subset x_j$ IF $x_i$ IS PL	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
B-ii.	$\{x_i\} \subset x_j$ IF $x_i$ IS SG	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
C.	$x_i = x_{j_{context}}$	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓
D.	$x_i = x_{j_{disc.sit.}}$	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓

Table 1: Uses of suffixal determiners (possessive paradigm unless indicated otherwise)

### 3 Semantic variation

We are now in a position to identify parameters of variation, as a first step in developing a unified account of the semantics of suffixal determiners.

The first axis of variation is the (non)acceptability of a suffixal determiner in “anaphoric identity” contexts (Pattern C in table 1). This sets Turkish, Komi, Buryat, and Mordvin (“definite”) apart from Mari and Mordvin (possessive). That is, only in the former group the use of a suffixal determiner is felicitous when the intended referent of the relevant DP is identical to the individual verifying the truthful utterance of an antecedent expression.

Another dimension of variation is the (un)acceptability of a suffixal determiner in contexts where an individual to be identified with the intended referent of the relevant DP is given in the discourse situation (rather than in a linguistic context). Along this dimension, Turkish accusative, Komi possessive, Mordvin “definite”, and Buryat accusative determiners contrast with Buryat, Mari, and Mordvin possessive determiners (Pattern D).

Finally, there is a contrast between Mordvin, Turkish, and Buryat on the one hand and Komi and Mari on the other with respect to whether there is a designated paradigm for properly possessive uses. In Buryat the split is operative only in the object position, where possessive contexts are covered by a possessive rather than an accusative suffix.

I take the meaning component common to all the determiners considered above to be a relation between an antecedent and elements from the denotation of the head noun. This can be implemented as a relational variable  $R$  in the denotations of the bound determiners, adopting the label proposed in Elbourne (2008) for the relational component in the semantics of English demonstratives. The requirement to have an antecedent will be modelled as a silent individual pronoun at the left periphery of DP, which can be either bound or mapped to an individual by a context-dependent assignment function. I will also assume a silent situation pronoun in the structure which fills the Kratzerian situation argument in the denotation of a determiner.

The first and the third points of variation can be formally captured by assigning different ranges to the relational variable  $R$ , as in (28).

- (28)  $\llbracket det \rrbracket = \lambda P_{\langle e, \langle s, t \rangle \rangle} \cdot \lambda y_e \cdot \lambda x_e \cdot \lambda s_\sigma \cdot P(x)(s) \ \& \ R(x)(y)$   
       where  $R$  = possession MORDVIN POSS, TURKISH POSS  
       where  $R$  = inclusion, identity MORDVIN DEF, BURYAT OBJ  
       where  $R$  = possession, inclusion MARI, BURYAT POSS  
       where  $R$  = possession, inclusion, identity TURKISH OBJ, KOMI

Having considered the pragmatic aspect of the variation in section 4, I will argue that these ranges form non-accidental clusters of values, although for the moment this may look as a purely descriptive procedure. I will also sketch a solution for capturing the second point of variation.

As a toy example of semantic composition, let us consider Mari form *pij-že*, genuinely ambiguous between “his dog” and “one of those dogs” in (29). The relatum argument is filled by a silent pronoun (with an index *i*). Although this is not central to the current discussion, I assume that the person features a determiner bears trigger presuppositions about the identity of the potential antecedent. Following common conventions, I implement these as restrictions on the domain of the corresponding argument, which translate into definedness conditions of the resulting function.<sup>10</sup>

- (29)  $\llbracket 3sg \rrbracket^{g,c}(\llbracket dog \rrbracket^{g,c})(\llbracket i \rrbracket^{g,c})$  is defined if  $g(i)$  is not a speaker or hearer,  
 if defined,  $\llbracket 3sg \rrbracket^{g,c}(\llbracket dog \rrbracket^{g,c})(\llbracket i \rrbracket^{g,c}) = \lambda x . \lambda s . x$  is a dog in  $s$  and  $R(x)(g(i))$ ,  
 where  $R$  = possession, inclusion

## 4 Pragmatic variation

Another dimension of variation, in addition to the range of relations covered by the suffixal determiners in our sample, has to do with the range of interpretations available in negative and intensional contexts. In this respect, determiners considered here fall into two groups, those which are compatible with the both narrow and wide scope existential interpretation and those compatible only with the wide scope interpretation.

Turkish, Mari, and Mordvin possessive determiners belong to the former group. Narrow scope readings are illustrated in (30), (31), and (32) where the existence of an individual with the property denoted by the noun phrase is effectively negated.

- (30) Ben-im kız kardeş-**im** yok.  
 I-GEN.1SG sister-1SG not.exist-3SG  
 ‘I don’t have (a) sister.’ [TURKISH]
- (31) myj-yn aka-**m** uke.  
 I-GEN sister-1SG be.NEG  
 “I don’t have a sister.” [MARI]
- (32) mon’ aš sazər-**əz’ə**  
 I NEG sister-1SG  
 “I don’t have a sister.” [MORDVIN]

In contrast, Mordvin “definite” determiners, (33), and Buryat and Komi possessive determiners, (35) & (37), are only compatible with a wide scope existential interpretation. A narrow scope interpretation is available only if there is no determiner, as (34), (36), and (38) show.

- (33) men’ vele-sə-nək aš sel’skəi predsdat’el’-s.  
 we.GEN village-INESS-1PL NEG local head-DEF  
 “The local head is not in our village.” [MORDVIN]
- (34) men’ vele-sə-nək aš sel’skəi predsdat’el’.  
 we.GEN village-INESS-1PL NEG local head  
 “There is no local head in our village.” [MORDVIN]

<sup>10</sup>I assume that if no quantifier is present, existential closure applies to the individual argument.

- (35) minii exε noxoj-**nni** ugy.  
I.GEN big dog-1SG NEG  
“My big dog is not here.” [BURYAT]
- (36) minii exε noxoj ugy.  
I.GEN big dog NEG  
“I don’t have a big dog.” [BURYAT]
- (37) menam abu pon-**me**.  
I.GEN NEG dog  
“My dog is not with me.” [KOMI]
- (38) menam abu pon.  
I.GEN NEG dog  
“I don’t have a dog.” [KOMI]

For the case of the accusative suffixes in Turkish and Buryat, I probe for the availability of a narrow scope interpretation with respect to intensional predicates, since negation with an existence predicate is not a syntactic option for these markers and in non-intensional contexts the test becomes less reliable because it is more difficult to completely rule out a wide scope interpretation. As (39) and (40) show, in both languages the accusative marker is out with predicates of creation in intensional contexts, which only allow for a narrow scope interpretation.

- (39) Kim (bir) ev(\*-i) yap-mak ist-iyor.  
Kim a/one house-acc make-INF want-PROG.3SG  
“Kim wants to build a house.” [TURKISH]
- (40) Bair ger(\*-e) barixa hana-taj.  
Bair house-ACC build desire-COM.3SG  
“Bair wants to build a house.” [KOMI]

Table 2 gives a summary of the semantic and pragmatic patterns together.

PATTERN		TUR	TUR OBJ	KOM	BUR	BUR OBJ	MAR	MOR	MOR “DEF”
A.	$x_i$ OWNED BY $x_j$	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
B-i.	$x_i \subset x_j$ IF $x_i$ IS PL	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
B-ii.	$\{x_i\} \subset x_j$ IF $x_i$ IS SG	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
C.	$x_i = x_{j_{context}}$	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓
D.	$x_i = x_{j_{disc.sit.}}$	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓
E.	NARROW SCOPE	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗

Table 2: Uses of suffixal determiners (possessive paradigm unless indicated otherwise)

## 5 Deriving the variation

With regard to table 2, notice that there is a perfect negative correlation between an identity relation with a context antecedent being in the range of available relations and the possibility of a narrow scope reading with respect to negation. I propose that this is not an accident. Rather, this pattern follows from the assumption that if R can take an identity relation value, a determiner carries the presupposition that there exists an element (in the relevant domain) with the nominal property in the relation R to the antecedent (cf. Elbourne (2008)’s treatment of demonstratives). One can check that in contexts where there is an antecedent, for the identity relation case this is formally equivalent to the requirement that the antecedent have the nominal property. This requirement is justified given general constraints on the use of anaphoric determiners. For instance, this captures the infelicity of the following anaphoric chain in English (and in any other language I am familiar with, for that matter): *#a pig ... That dog ...*. In other words, this presupposition naturally accompanies identity relations since



otherwise the resulting expression would have been wrongly predicted to hold of individuals which have antecedents without the relevant nominal property. I therefore revise the lexical entry for the determiners which have identity in the range of their relational variable, as in (41).

$$(41) \quad \llbracket det \rrbracket = \lambda P_{\langle e, \langle s, t \rangle \rangle} \cdot \lambda y_e \cdot \lambda x_e \cdot \lambda s_\sigma : \exists x[P(x)(s) \ \& \ R(x)(y)] \cdot P(x)(s) \ \& \ R(x)(y),$$

where  $R = \dots$  identity  $\dots$

Now if “definite” determiners in Mordvin, possessive determiners in Buryat and Komi, and accusative determiners in Turkish and Buryat (all those with checkmarks in Pattern C line, anaphoric identity relation) trigger existence presupposition, it explains why they are only compatible with a wide scope existential interpretation. A context which satisfies this presupposition is logically incompatible with negating the existence of individuals with the nominal property standing in relation  $R$  to the antecedent or with asserting the desirability of their creation. This captures the perfect negative correlation between Patterns C and E.

I propose that this presupposition is also responsible for blocking Turkish and Mordvin possessive suffixes from the contexts with a superset antecedent, which makes them contrast with their Mari counterparts which appear in such contexts. Superset antecedent contexts are different from properly possessive ones in that the existence of a superset entails the existence of its subparts, which, assuming the Maximize Presupposition principle (Heim 1991, Chemla 2008, Singh 2009), gives rise to a grammatical pressure to use a determiner which triggers existence presupposition, which corresponds to an accusative marker in Turkish and a “definite” determiner in Mordvin. The existence of a possessor, on the other hand, in most cases does not entail the existence of a possessee, hence no pressure to use presupposition triggers in possessive contexts.

There also seems to be an empirical contrast in how strongly speakers prefer to use existence presupposition triggers (again, determiners having checkmarks in Pattern C and crosses in Pattern E) in contexts with a direct vs. proper superset antecedent (reflected in the examples with \* vs. # signs of unacceptability), the latter contexts more easily allowing for determiner omission. Although this issue will have to await a more thorough investigation, I speculate that since a referent verifying a direct antecedent necessitates the existence of an identical individual (i.e. itself) irrespective of the evaluation situation, the relation between a group and its members is less straightforward and the existential entailment depends on the situation parameter.

Finally, among determiners having an identity relation in the range of their  $R$  variable, Turkish and Buryat accusative markers pattern with Komi possessive and Mordvin “definite” determiners in being used in context where the relevant referent does not correspond to a linguistic context (Pattern D in Tables 1–2). In this respect, they contrast with Buryat possessive determiners which require linguistic antecedents. One possible way to model this contrast is by putting different restrictions on the interpretations of the pronominal element in the Logical Forms of these determiners, for instance, by limiting the range of values for the silent pronoun in Buryat to referents already invoked in the preceding discourse. Another possibility is to assume that the Logical Form of the former group, insensitive to the presence of linguistic antecedents, actually does not have either a pronominal element or a relational component in their semantics, and that all the interpretative effects are due to the existential presupposition they trigger. At least for Turkish, an analysis along these lines is proposed by Keleşir (2001). One argument in favour of having a pronominal element in the Logical Form is that suffixal determiners in all these languages are used in noun phrases with an elided noun, as (42) from Buryat illustrates. This pattern is expected assuming that the suffix spells out a pronominal whose antecedent is the same expression as the one that licenses ellipsis.

- (42) bi avtobus-abl xožomd-oo-b. hylšɛnxe-ɛr-ɛn' jabaa-b.  
 I bus-abl be.late-PRT-1SG NEXT-INSTR-3SG go-1SG  
 "I missed the bus. I will take the next one."

[BURYAT]

## 6 Conclusions

Suffixal determiners not associated with maximal quantification have been shown to exhibit a significant degree of variation in their distribution in a sample taken from Finno-Ugric, Mongolian, and Turkic languages. I proposed to parametrize the variation by assigning different ranges to the value of the relational component R in the semantics of the determiners. In particular, I argued that the availability of an identity relation as a value for R is always accompanied by an existence presupposition, which, in turn, derives the variation in terms of the availability of narrow scope interpretation in negative and intensional contexts, as well as the patterns of paradigm competition in languages with more than one series of suffixal determiners ("definite" or accusative) series of markers. To the extent that this parametrization is successful, we can talk of a typological class of specific determiners with predictable variation.

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