Abstract. In some languages, the distinction between alienable and inalienable possession appears to be ‘grammaticalized’ (cf present-day French Il ouvrit ses lettres vs il ouvrit les yeux). In English, however, this distinction is not made. In Finnish, the situation is less clear cut, although in general some kind of possessor-marker is usually used with inalienable nouns and in particular body-part nouns. Exceptions to this are in the nominative absolute construction, whole-part structures and noun phrases in the instructive case. In other categories (eg subjects, objects and place adverbials) there is some flexibility, with various semantic and pragmatic factors influencing the use/non-use of possessive markers (eg potential ambiguity, the desire to generalize or depersonalize, and stylistic elegance). The omission of possessive markers in Finnish then appears to be a discourse-level resource rather than evidence of the grammaticalization of inalienability.

1. Introduction

Interest in inalienable possession dates at least as far back as Lévy-Bruhl’s (1914) study in which he noted that in Melanesian languages there are different grammatical structures for nouns designating inalienable as opposed to alienable phenomena. Inalienable nouns typically refer to ‘permanent’ features such as body parts and kinship relations, and are accompanied in many of the world’s languages by a variety of specific morphological and syntactic features which are not used with nouns referring to non-permanent (alienable) phenomena.¹ The familiar case of present-day French² will serve as an example:

Alienable:

(1) Il ouvrit ses lettres. (‘He opened his letters’)

Inalienable:

(2a) Il ouvrit les yeux. (‘He opened his eyes’)
(2b) *Il ouvrit ses yeux.

¹ For a concise overview of the kinds of morphological mechanisms used to express alienable/inalienable possession see Haiman (1983: 793-794); for a more comprehensive account see Seiler (1983).
(3a) Il se lava *les mains. (‘He washed his hands’)
(3b) Il lava *ses mains.

(4a) Je lui ai coupé *les cheveux. (‘I cut his hair’)
(4b) J’ai coupé ses cheveux.

Here the use of *ses (‘his’) before yeux, mains and cheveux would not be idiomatic. In this sense then the alienable/inalienable distinction appears to be grammaticalized in French.

In English, by contrast, this kind of distinction is only very marginal. The term inalienable only appears once in Quirk et al (1985: 1329), who mention denominal modifiers in -ed which are used to express inalienable (but not alienable) possession:

(5a) a white-bearded man
(5b) *a two-carred man.

Seiler (1983: 29), however, citing Ljung, does mention another structure as evidence of such a distinction in English, viz. bahuvrihi compounds, which only occur with inalienable nouns:

(6a) a pretty face, a loud mouth
(6b) *a small house, *a red car

(the latter cannot be used to refer to a person with a small house or a red car).

These structures are rather marginal, however, both being largely idiomatic in character and not fully productive patterns in the language. A little more central are whole-part structures,\(^3\) which are grammatically distinct in that they disallow possessive pronouns and are limited to situations expressing inalienable possession:

(7a) She patted him on the head.
(7b) *She patted him on his head.

Besides these, though, there is nothing in English as widespread as the types of sentence quoted above from French. Indeed, Haiman (1983: 794) states categorically that English makes ‘no overt distinction between alienable and inalienable possession’. French and English can therefore be seen as fairly good examples of languages which, respectively, do and do not systematically grammaticalize inalienability.

When we turn our attention to Finnish, however, the situation is far less clear-cut. Examples like the following seem to suggest that inalienable nouns do behave idiosyncratically:

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\(^3\) I shall use the term ‘whole-part structures’ for those structures where the person affected is the direct object of the clause, and where the body part is signalled by means of a prepositional phrase. The term ‘part-whole structure’ is used when the body part is the direct object and the person affected the indirect object (as in examples (3) and (4) above for French). In generative descriptions these have been referred to variously as instances of ‘possessor raising’, ‘possessor ascension’ or ‘possession promotion’, because sentences like I kissed her on the lips have been said to be derived from I kissed her lips (see Haiman 1983: 815).
(8a) Onko roskia tukassa?

(9a) Veli tulee huomenna.

(10a) Työ eteni, mutta voimat olivat lopussa.

Compare English:

(8b) Are there twigs in my hair? (*the hair)

(9b) My brother’s coming tomorrow. (*Ø/*the brother)

(10b) The work progressed, but his strength was failing. (*the strength)

Differences in usage like these suggest that in Finnish, inalienability is possibly grammaticalized and deserves closer investigation.

2. Procedure

To find out just how widespread the phenomenon is, the Tampere Finnish-English Bilingual Computer Corpus was searched for similar cases to those quoted above. First, all the English sentences containing possessives were culled from the corpus. Next, all those cases (among these) where the corresponding Finnish sentences also had a possessive marker were identified and removed. This then left a sub-corpus of sentences containing structures very much like those in examples (7a), (8a) and (9a) above.

The nouns designating the possessed entity in each sentence were then organized into semantic categories. The results were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Instances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>parts of the body</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>family relations</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clothing</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personal possessions, tools, etc</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>physical &amp; mental characteristics</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is interesting here is that these categories coincide closely with the inalienable noun-types listed in the literature. First there are the body parts and kinship relations mentioned earlier; but Grevisse (1962: 354) also speaks of clothes and faculties of the mind (‘les facultés de l’âme’), and Seiler (1983: 4) adds ‘material belongings and cultural products’. These clearly correspond with the other three categories found in the Tampere Corpus, suggesting that Finnish is another language which grammaticalizes inalienability.

To test this hypothesis, one of these categories – body part nouns – was examined in more detail. This is an area on which there is a considerable amount of published research. Witness, for example, the full title of Chappell and McGregor’s recent (1996) survey of inalienability: The Grammar of Inalienability: A Typological Perspective on Body Part Terms and the Part-

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4 The Tampere Bilingual Corpus consists of long extracts from eight novels and their translations. See Appendix 1 and Cooper (1998b).
Yet even though this account is extremely comprehensive, it contains no mention of Finnish.

To investigate this further, therefore, a list of some twenty-seven nouns, all designating parts of the body, was drawn up, and further searches conducted with the Tampere Corpus. This yielded a total of 766 sentences all containing body part nouns.

After a cursory examination, it soon became clear that a useful way of analyzing these would be on the basis of their syntactic status. Finnish does not have special morphological markers which are used specifically with inalienable nouns, but there are syntactic patterns something like those in French, where certain structures are particularly susceptible to grammatical restrictions with respect to inalienability. The Tampere data was thus organized according to the following syntactic categories: subjects, objects, prepositional complements, whole-part structures, and nominative absolutes. Finally, the sentences were also coded according to the following criteria:

+ possessor in both languages

(11) Kasvoni olivat kapeammat, ihoni vaaleampi, jänennen hennommat kuin vahvojen poikien. (SINU 1:4:79)
My face was narrower, my skin lighter, and my limbs more slender than those of the other lads.

O possessor in neither language

(12) Kapea, sinisuoninen käsi oli osoittanut sitää kartalta. (TS 9:3:13)
A blue-veined hand had pointed to it on a map.

X possessor in English, but not in Finnish

(13) Her eyes caught a momentary flash of what the reflected sunset must look like on her cheeks.
Silmät siinä ikäänkuin sivumennen saivat aavistuksen, kuinka iltapunerrus heijastui poskipäistä. (SILJA 11:23)

! possessor in Finnish, but not in English

(14) Terävänenäinen sotamies käänsi pelästyneenä päänsä. (MK 2:97)
The long-nosed soldier turned a frightened face.

3. Results (for more detailed statistics see Appendix 3)

Looking first at the overall picture, what emerges immediately is that each structure seems to have its own distinctive ‘profile’:

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5 See Appendix 2.
6 Being an inflected language, Finnish uses case-endings rather than prepositions or postpositions. The prepositional complements of English thus appear in Finnish as nouns in one of the language’s many oblique cases. In the discussion which follows, I shall use the blanket term ‘adverbial’ to cover these structures.
Figures 1–5.

Each of these different profiles will now be examined in turn.

**Objects**

The chart offering the clearest picture is that for objects (Figure 2). This shows that in both English and Finnish the possessor is nearly always present when the body part noun is the object of the sentence:

(15) Vartijat kumartavat päänsä ja laskevat känsä polvien tasalle edessäni. (SINU 1:1:60)

Guards bow *their heads* and stretch out *their hands* at knee level before me.

(16) She had painted *her face*. (1984 2:4:149)

Hän oli maalannut *kasvonsa*.

This is particularly interesting because it is precisely in the case of objects that French marks possession not with a possessive pronoun, but with the definite article (as in examples (2), (3) and (4) above).\(^7\)

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\(^7\) Examples (2), (3) and (4) actually represent three different structures: ‘instinctive actions’, where the action is made by the body part itself, as in example (2); ‘reflexive body moves’, where an action is *applied to* the body part, as in example (3); and finally, cases where an action is performed upon another person, as in example (3) (see Langaker 1968: 65, and Kliffer 1984: 189-190). Originally, the Finnish objects were classified according to these three types, but as this revealed no differences in terms of the presence or absence of the possessor, all three were simply grouped together.
Whole-part structures

Next least equivocal are Figures 4 and 5. The first of these shows the results for whole-part structures (*He hit me on the arm*) where neither English nor Finnish allow the possessor before the body part noun.8

(17) Siksi ryhdistäydyin ja katsoin häntä suoraan silmiin. (SINU 2:2:36)
I drew myself up and looked her in the eye.

(18) He held her tightly by the wrist and suddenly she stayed still, looking up at him. (P&G 2:1b:528)
Hän piteli tyttöä tiukasti ranteesta, ja äkkiä tyttö pysyi alallaan katsellen ylös häneen.

Nominative absolutes

Nominative absolutes are shown in Figure 5, and here the profile is once again different. With these structures the possessor is *never* marked in Finnish, but *is* usually marked in English:

(19) Suu raollaan hän katsoi miesten läpi jonnekin kauaksi. (MK 4:54)
With *his* mouth slightly open he stared past the men to some point beyond.

(20) Siksi itsekseni häntä ajatellessani kuiskasin kasvot kuumina: Sisareni. (SINU 2:2:162)
When I thought of her, I whispered *with burning cheeks*, ‘My sister.’

In the best of all possible worlds, of course, an investigation like the present one would produce a set of water-tight rules for Finnish and English usage; in other words, rules in which an unequivocal formal structure accounts for the presence/omission of the possessor. And indeed, so far this appears to be the case: with objects, nominative absolutes and whole-part structures the rules may all be different, but they do have predictive and explanatory power:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possessor present?</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Finnish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Object</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nom Abs</td>
<td>yes/no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole-Part</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When we look at the remaining structures, however, matters are less clear-cut.

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8 Only 8 instances of whole-part structures were actually found in the Corpus, but one of these, surprisingly, was the X-type, with a possessor in English but not in Finnish:

Rokka tuljutti huohottavaa miestä hartiosta. (TS 9:6:3)
Rokka shook the panting man by his shoulders.

In view of the small number of instances found, the results in this case (O-type 88%, X-type 12%) are doubtless misleading.
Subjects

The profile for subjects is shown in Figure 1, and here there is some vacillation in both Finnish and English. True, in 62% of these cases (the ‘+’ types), the possessor is present with subjects in both languages, as in the following examples:

(21) His eyes were sly and cautious. (P&G 2:1a:66)

Hänen silmänsä olivat viekkaat ja varovaiset.

(22) Hänen kasvonsa olivat vanhuuttaan kuivuneet ja ryppyiset eikä hänellä ollut hampaita. (SINU 1:3:164)

His face was dried and wizened with age, and he had no teeth.

Interestingly, however, there are also cases (17%) where neither language has the possessor (the ‘O-types’):

(23) Läheltä ammuttu luoti oli tehnyt pahaa jälkeää. Vain kasvot olivat jääneet. (MK 3:367)

The bullet had made a gruesome mess of the officer’s head. Only the face was left.

(24) Winston woke first. He sat up and watched the freckled face, still peacefully asleep, pillowed on the palm of her hand. There was a line or two round the eyes, if you looked closely. The short dark hair was extraordinarily thick and soft. It occurred to him that he still did not know her surname or where she lived. (1984 2:2:277-282)


Now when three native-speakers of Finnish were asked whether a possessor would also be grammatically correct in these sentences, they all agreed that it would, but then the ‘depersonalizing’ effect of the original would be lost. This also corresponds with my own feelings about the English. Note, for instance, that in the case of the first example, the writer is describing a dead body, and in the second someone who is asleep – someone, moreover, who is a stranger, not a personal acquaintance.

It seems, then, that the possessor can be omitted in both languages to achieve certain stylistic effects. The following examples are somewhat different, however:


He kept his balance well, although his feet occasionally strayed from the path. His blue eyes stared unblinkingly at the alders and only an occasional hiccup escaped him.

(26) ‘You’re hurt,’ he said.


‘Loukkautuitteko?’ hän kysyi.

‘Ei se mitään... Käisivarsi vain. Kohta se taas on hyvä.’

I wish to thank Sari Isokääntä, Annukka Kallioväkama and Mark Kaunisto for their assistance in this project.
From these examples, it seems that English does not accept possessor-omission as a stylistic resource quite as readily as Finnish. Again my informants spoke about depersonalization; but this time, the English has the normal possessive pronouns, and the use of the in these cases would (in my opinion) be impossible. It is acceptable if the person is dead or asleep, but not otherwise. Finnish is evidently more flexible in this respect.\(^{10}\)

Another reason for possessor-omission in Finnish can be seen in the following examples:

(27a) Hän näki, että turkislakki oli vierähtänyt Rokin pästä pois. Pää nojasi velttona konepistoolin perään. (TS 9:6:140-141)  
Rokka’s fur cap had fallen off and his head rested slackly on the butt of his weapon.

(28a) The girl’s shoulder, and her arm right down to the elbow, were pressed against his. (1984 2:1:265)  
Tytön olkapää ja oikea olkavarsi painautuivat tiukasti häneen.

Here my informants were agreed that had hänen been used the resulting sentences would have been ambiguous:

(27b) Hän näki, että turkislakki oli vierähtänyt Rokin pästä pois. Hänen päänsä nojasi velttona konepistoolin perään.

(28b) Tytön olkapää ja hänen oikea olkavarsi painautuivat tiukasti häneen.

Similar ambiguities could arise in English, of course, but Finnish seems to have an additional strategy to avoid ambiguity in such cases: possessor-omission. Interestingly, one of my informants\(^{11}\) suggested that a ‘zero-possessor’ has even more anaphoric force here than a possessive pronoun. This might seem curious, but a similar phenomenon is regularly found in Japanese, where anaphoric reference is signalled not by the use of pronouns, but by ellipsis – i.e. by omitting subsequent subjects altogether if they refer back to an earlier NP (see Clancy 1980).

A rather different case can be seen in the next example:

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\(^{10}\) There is an interesting parallel here in the uses of the Finnish and English demonstrative pronouns. Finnish tämä/tuo (‘this’/’that’) can be used to refer both to inanimate objects and persons (Penttilä 1957: 509):

Opettaja sanoi pojalle, että tämä lähtisi kotiin.

The teacher said to the boy that this [he] should go home.

‘Missä isä on?’ – ‘Eikö tuo liene pirtissä?’

‘Where’s father?’ – ‘Isn’t that [he] in the living-room?’

Huddleston (1984: 296) characterizes English usage thus: ‘As deictic pronouns, the demonstratives normally refer to non-humans: in Take that downstairs the that will refer to a thing not a person - if, as is perhaps just possible, it were used of a person, it would be grossly offensive and contemptuous precisely by virtue of treating a person as a mere thing.’

\(^{11}\) I am indebted to Sari Isokääntä for these observations.
Minun nuoruuteni jäi erämaahan, nälkään, vaivoihin ja rasituksiin. Siellä liha sulii jäsenistä, siellä nahka parkittiin, siellä sydän kovetettiin kiveä kovemmaksi.

I left my youth in the desert, robbed of it by starvation, privation, and hardship. There the flesh melted from my limbs, my skin toughened, and my heart hardened to stone.

Here, my informants all stated that the reason for the absence of any possessor is that the writer is making a statement about people generally, not a statement about one particular character. If this is true, then the English version is clearly a mistranslation and a more correct rendering would be with one’s or possibly your. And this points to the reason for the lack of possessor in Finnish here, namely that in Finnish there is no obvious pronoun corresponding here to the English generic pronoun one’s. In Finnish, therefore, generalizations typically have no possessor:

Jos katsotaan liikaa televisiota, silmät väsyvät.

(Literally: ‘If one watches too much television, eyes get tired.’)

In the next two examples, yet another factor rules against the presence of a possessor in Finnish: stylistic awkwardness or heaviness. Unlike the elegant monosyllabic possessive pronouns of English (my hat, your hat, his hat, our hats, etc) Finnish possessives are rather cumbersome: minun hattuni, sinun hattusi, hänen hattunsa, meidän hattumme, etc. All of my informants said therefore that sentences like the following with all the correct possessive structures present would be stylistically inelegant:

Her lips were deeply reddened, her cheeks rouged, her nose powdered.

Hänen huulensa olivat syvän punaiset, posketkin oli punattu ja nenä puuteroitu.

Rather than:

Hänen huulensa olivat syvän punaiset, hänen poskensakin oli punattu ja hänen nenäsä puuteroitu.

Still, that was not what he believed, and the unreasonable hope persisted, and his heart banged, and it was with difficulty that he kept his voice from trembling as he murmured his figures into the speakwrite.

Vielä nytkin, vaikka hän ei uskonutkaan sitä, hänen mielessään viipyi järjetön toivo, sydän jyskytti ja ääni vain vaivoin pysyi vapisematta hänen sanellessaan numeroita puhekirjoittimeen.

Rather than:

Vielä nytkin, vaikka hän ei uskonutkaan sitä, hänen mielessään viipyi järjetön toivo, hänen sydämensä jyskytti ja hänen äänensä vain vaivoin pysyi vapisematta hänen sanellessaan numeroita puhekirjoittimeen.

Prepositional complements (adverbials)

Prepositional complements (adverbials) have been left till last for two reasons. Firstly, we find very much the same criteria for possessor-omission in Finnish – especially with place adverbials.
Place and manner adverbials, a clearer picture emerges if these are divided into subgroups: place and manner adverbials.

Place adverbs which have no possessor because of the features that were mentioned above (depersonalization, potential ambiguity, generic reference and stylistic awkwardness) can be seen in the following examples:

**Generic:**

(33) Mutta Katarinan palautti varsinaisesti mieleen tukahduttava helle, joka nosti hien
*otsalle.*

But what really recalled her to him at this moment was the stifling heat of the afternoon, which had brought the sweat out *on his forehead.* (1984 2:3:180)

**Stylistically less cumbersome:**

(34a) She looked round at him, flushed, her dark eyes shining, her fine hair falling *about her face.* (S&L:B:271)

Hän vilkaisi Pauliin, punastui, hänen tummat silmänsä säteilivät, hänen pehmoinen tukkansa oli valahtanut *kasvoille.*

Rather than:

(34b) Hän vilkaisi Pauliin, punastui, hänen tummat silmänsä säteilivät, hänen pehmoinen tukkansa oli valahtanut *hänen kasvoilleen.*

Manner adverbials can be subdivided still further into (a) those with the adessive case (*molemmilla käsilään*) and (b) those with the instructive case (*molemmin käsin*). The adessives are exemplified in the following:

(35) Mrs. Leivers looked at the youth with *her brown,* *hurt* eyes. (S&L A:132)

Rouva Leivers katsoi nuorukaiseen *ruskeilla,* surumielisillä silmillään.

(36) ...ja kohotti *sormella* leukaani ja toi kasvonsa aivan lähelle kasvojani. (SINU 2:2:126)

...and she raised my chin *with her finger* and brought her face quite close.

Adessives, it seems, may have a possessive suffix, or they may not. The instructives on the other hand, virtually never have a possessive associated with them, either in Finnish or in their English equivalents:

(37) *Vapisevin käsin* hän repi auki pahvipakkauksia täyttäen Rokan tyhjentämiä rumpulippaita. (TS 9:6:130)

*With trembling fingers* he tore open the cardboard containers and filled the emptied drums with cartridges.

(38) Five seconds later, *with a thundering heart,* Winston was sitting at the girl=s table. (1984 2:1:196)

Viisi sekuntia myöhemmin Winston istui tytön pöydässä *jyskyttävin sydämin.*
This is supported by Penttilä (1957: 195), who says that instructives with a possessive suffix are ‘extremely rare’ in Finnish. He nevertheless cites the following examples: kaksin kämmeninsä (‘with his two hands’), omin päänsä (‘with one’s own head’) and omin voimisi (‘with your own strength’).

An interesting aspect of the adessive/instructive contrast was pointed out by one of my informants. The instructive, it seems, does not normally allow a possessive suffix because it is typically only used to refer to temporary situations, as in (37) and (38) above. When it is a question of a more permanent characteristic, the adessive + possessive suffix would be more appropriate, the possessive marker indicating that a particular feature really is part of the person, as in Example (35) above.

4. Conclusions

Two findings emerge from the present investigation. First, although some structures in Finnish disallow possessor markers (nominative absolutes, whole-part structures and instructives) the question of inalienability does not figure very widely in Finnish: a Finnish possessor was actually present in 80% of those sentences where English required a possessor – i.e. the ‘+ types’ and the ‘X types’). Thus, like the three structures mentioned for English earlier, the three Finnish structures are all somewhat marginal, which means that in this respect Finnish resembles English more than it resembles French. Interestingly, however, even French is not a ‘pure’ example of a language which grammaticalizes inalienability. Instances are often quoted in the literature of sentences like Examples (2), (3) and (4) above where a possessive pronoun is used, and not the definite article. Nevertheless, these cases are unusual or ‘marked’, whereas in Finnish, as we have seen, it is the omission of the possessive which is the marked alternative.

12 There was, in fact, one example of an instructive + possessive suffix in the Tampere Corpus:

Mutta vaikka hän kuinka tutki maata käsineen, ei hän mitään ymmärtänyt. (MK 3:443)
He combed the ground with his hands: it told him nothing.

It might seem at first sight that this is a comitative rather than an instructive: nouns in the comitative have the ending -ine, are always in the plural, and always have the possessive suffix. Formally, then, a plural instructive + possessive suffix is identical to a comitative, and in view of the rarity of such instructives, it is tempting to see this particular example as a comitative. The only problem is that semantically the comitative expresses ‘accompaniment’ rather than ‘manner’.

13 Because of the possibility of either the definite article or a possessive pronoun in languages like French, some writers reject the whole notion of inalienability. Wierzbicka (1988: 234) writes: ‘If we want our constructs (including hypothesized syntactic constructions) to have predictive power, we must base them not on vague pseudo-scientific concepts like ‘inalienable possession’, but on much more specific, clear and intuitively verifiable ones.’ Similarly, in her analysis of Middle Dutch, Burridge (1996: 694) says: ‘The dative is not simply used to express the relationship of identity between body part and owner. This is only part of the story...The concept of inalienability does not make it clear what is really going on here.’ And likewise, for German, Neumann (1966: 745) states: ‘The aim of this study is to show that the constructions used in the grammar of body parts in German...are not triggered by the occurrence of a specific set of [inalienable] nouns...but reflect a number of different semantic relations which can hold within the part-whole relation.’ These views reflect my findings for Finnish.

14 The notion of ‘markedness’ is defined in two different ways. The first, where words are ‘formally’ (inconically) marked/unmarked is described by Jakobson (1966: 270) thus: ‘Within a grammatical
The second finding was that where Finnish differs from English and does allow the omission of the possessor, this is more easily accounted for at the discourse level than in terms of grammatical or syntactical restraints. The factors involved are depersonalization, ambiguity, generic meaning and stylistic elegance. Some of these criteria have been observed in the use of different body-part constructions in other languages too.

In German, for example, Neumann (1996: 755), notes that whereas the use of the dative case (with the possessor) is the norm, the use of the genitive can ‘convey the impression that the body part is somehow detached from the whole’. This clearly has a parallel with the ‘depersonalized’ uses attested for Finnish. Moreover, a similar contrast is found in Middle Dutch between the use of a possessive pronoun or a genitive (see Burridge 1996: 696).

As regards stylistic elegance, Haiman (1983: 795) makes some interesting remarks about ‘bulky’ structures. ‘In no language,’ he says, ‘will the phonological expression of inalienable possession be bulkier than that of alienable possession.’ As we have seen, the avoidance of bulkiness with body-part expressions is one of the resources which Finnish can make use of.

Languages, then, can exploit alternative structures to express a variety of supplementary meanings. Other examples include Romanian, where alternative body-part constructions are used to express a contrast between literal and metaphorical meanings (Manoliu-Manea 1996: 723), and French, where similar methods are employed to describe routine or ritualistic contexts as opposed to what is original or unusual (Hatcher 1944: 163). We should not be surprised then if Roegiest and Spanoghe (1991: 87) should present the following critique of Langaker: ‘Langaker introduit la sémantique au moment où son approche purement syntaxique s’avère impuissant’ [Langaker fell back on semantics as soon as his purely syntactic approach proved inadequate]. Roegiest and Spanoghe therefore use an approach they describe as ‘sémantico-pragmatique’ (ibid. p. 86). And a similar strategy is used by Burridge (1996: 699) in her description of Middle Dutch, in which factors like ‘contrasting prominence’, ‘topic worthiness’, ‘lack of volitionality’ and the ‘relative degree of involvement of the person in the whole of the event’ are all important. The last two of these have already been seen to be instrumental in determining possessor-omission in Finnish, and it would certainly be interesting to investigate the role played by the others.

5. Further implications

There is another dimension to all this, however. For the most part, linguistic research into inalienable possession has been the preserve of typologists. Seiler’s classic monograph, Possession as an Operational Dimension of Language, reviews research covering numerous exotic languages and is essentially a typological classification. Research into European languages meanwhile has focussed on their development from classical times to the present, but correlation, a zero affix cannot steadily be assigned to a marked category and a ‘non-zero’ (real) affix to an unmarked category.’ In contrast to this, there is ‘semantic’ (relative) marking. Haiman (1980: 529) says that ‘unmarkedness’ is not immutable or absolute, but is defined relative to a context... For a general example, consider the case of a bilingual who speaks French at home and English at the office. Marked linguistic behaviour for such a person is the use of French at home and English at the office. Neither language and neither context is in itself marked.’ Thus when I claim here that the absence of a possessive suffix is the marked alternative in Finnish, I am using the notion of markedness in this ‘relative’ sense.
again with the emphasis on typology. Where then does Finnish fit into language typology with respect to inalienable possession?

Languages have been traditionally classified, of course, in terms of the extent to which they favour analytical structures on the one hand and synthetic structures on the other. English with its multi-word verbs, its articles and prepositions is an example of the former, and Finnish with all its inflections is a classic case of the latter. But languages evolve, and the textbook scenario is of Language X gradually losing its inflections and becoming more analytic, and of Language Y gaining inflections and becoming more synthetic. Because both developments are found, it can be claimed that language evolution is a cyclical process, with different languages being located at different points in the cycle (see Croft 1990: 229).

English, for example, after losing its inflections now seems to be gaining them again: colloquial words like wanna and gonna for want to and going to, and verbal groups like wouldn’t’ve for would not have certainly seem to point to a shift towards synthetic structures.

In Finnish, meanwhile, the possessive suffixes, which are clearly the result of the process of synthesis (kirjat + me = kirjamme) can, as we have seen, be dropped altogether under certain circumstances, and this might well be an indicator of a drift towards less synthetic and more analytic structures generally. Witness, for instance, the loss of inflections in colloquial Finnish (as in Kylä ne tulee for Kylä he tulevat and Me mennään Helsinkiin for Me menemme Helsinkiin) and even the use of analytical structures like ‘articles’ (Pihassa kivi yks kiusa eilen or Missä on ne kirjat mitä ostin?). Colloquial language is like a window on the future, which makes the following sentences from the Tampere Corpus doubly interesting:

(39) – Kaik käi ri ympärs... Kaik mene silmis yht kiäppi vaa, soperteli Hietanen tarrautuen käsin ruohon kiinni. (TS 10:2:176-177)
   ‘Everything’s going round... the world’s spinning before my eyes,’ babbled Hietanen, clutching the grass to keep himself steady.

(40) – Ei, sen määki sano, etei tul toinen porukka hyppää silmil, sanoi Hietanen. (TS 10:2:64)
   ‘You can bet your life no other gang’s going to jump down our throats,’ said Hietanen.

All of my informants agreed that absence of the possessor in these examples is markedly colloquial and that formal Finnish would require a possessive pronoun. This corroborates Haiman’s ‘principle of iconicity’, whereby less formal registers typically involve shorter and less complex structures (Haiman 1983: 800-801). But Bally (1926: 34) also argued that colloquial language, being more personal and subjective, is also more unstable, because it is precisely the processes of subjective, interpersonal communication that are constantly undergoing renewal in any language. This seems to be borne out in the possessive structures of present-day Finnish.

To conclude, then: besides establishing the syntactic environments for the omission of the possessor with inalienable nouns in English and Finnish, the present study has also thrown light on some of the textual and discourse factors which lead to the suppression of possessive pronouns. But if we stand back a little further still, it is possible that what we are also seeing in

15 Bally (1926, 1996) is a good example.
Finnish is the start of a modern tendency by which possessive suffixes (and other synthetic features) will gradually disappear altogether, as a result of which, from the typological standpoint, Finnish will become a very different language from what it is today.

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REFERENCES


APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Novels represented in the Tampere Bilingual Corpus

MK  Manillaköysi by Veijo Meri
SILJA  Nuorena nukkunut by F. E. Sillanpää
SINU  Sinuhe by Mika Waltari
TS  Tuntematon sotilas by Väinö Linna

1984  Nineteen Eighty-Four by George Orwell
FLW  The French Lieutenant’s Woman by John Fowles
P&G  The Power and the Glory by Graham Greene
S&L  Sons and Lovers by D. H. Lawrence

Appendix 2 Body-part nouns used in the present survey

ankle  cheek  foot  heart  mouth  wrist
arm  chin  forehead  hip  neck
back  eye  hair  knee  nose
bosom  face  hand  leg  shoulder
breast  finger  head  limb  skin

Appendix 3 Statistics

Table 1. The overall picture.

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<tr>
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<td>+ 253  O 71  X 49  ! 9</td>
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+ possessor in both languages
O possessor in neither language
X no possessor in Finnish
! no possessor in English
* Other types: these include objects of the verb have, which are not realised as ‘objects’ in Finnish, and ‘genitive’ constructions (the smell of her hair, two blinks of the eye), which only occurred very rarely with congruent translations.
Table 2. Finnish and English novels combined

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