

Genitive and the secondary declension of the Mordvin languages – a syntactic perspective

The declensional systems of the Mordvin languages Erzya (E) and Moksha (M) are rather complex, as both languages have both an indefinite and a definite declension of nouns. Moreover, the term *secondary declension* is used to refer to a construction of two components in which a case suffix of the indefinite declension is followed by a case suffix of the definite declension; the second component codes the syntactic function of the construction, while the first one is usually described to behave more like a derivational ending (e.g. EK 2000: 107–108, MK 2000: 72–73), e.g. E *pakša-so-ś* (field-INE.INDEF-NOM.DEF) ‘the one that is on the field’, M *kud-sta-t’i* (house-ELA.INDEF-ILL.DEF) ‘to the one that comes from the house’. In a sentence, these constructions can be employed independently as NPs. Therefore, they can be regarded as instances of *case compounding*, which is a relatively well-known phenomenon cross-linguistically (see e.g. Plank 1995, Noonan 2008).

However, there are restrictions as to which cases can serve as the first or second component. Furthermore, Erzya and Moksha are not completely uniform in this respect. One of the restrictions relates to the use of the genitive as the first component; the indefinite genitive in *-ń* does not appear as such in these contexts but in both languages a special element (E *-će-*, M *-ńǎ-*) follows the *-ń* producing extended genitive forms (E *-ńće-*, M *-ńńǎ-*) into which the definite case suffixes are attached, e.g. E *učitel’e-ńće-ś*, M *učit’ǎ-ńńǎ-ś* (teacher-EXTGEN-NOM.DEF) ‘the one that belongs to the teacher’. (See Hamari 2009 for a treatment of the Moksha form.) On the other hand, these genitive forms can also be used as nominal predicates and they can acquire conjugational endings in that case.

In my presentation I will consider the Erzya and Moksha extended genitive forms from a comparative perspective: I will (i) treat the syntactic properties of the constructions in the present-day languages and (ii) consider the development of the forms and their functions. Finally, I will (iii) consider the Mordvin suffixes and their uses in the light of typological studies.

Bibliography:

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