

Irina Burukina: "Dative postpositions and agreement in Mari: What can infinitives tell us?"

Abstract

The talk focuses on the infinitival clauses in Meadow Mari (Uralic, Morkinsko-Sernur dialect; head-final, SOV) that allow overt subjects and agreement on the infinitive. I will outline a novel analysis whereby embedded subjects in Mari are exceptionally licensed by a silent dative postposition (P_DAT) heading the infinitival clause, which is also responsible for AGR. I will further put the data into a broader context. First, I will discuss the well-known analyses that postulate that the non-finite T has special Case/Agr properties and show that, although these approaches appear to match the data, they fail to make valid predictions. Thus, the Mari data contribute to the discussion of exceptional case marking across the world's languages. Second, I will demonstrate how studying the infinitival clauses improves our understanding of the syntax of postpositional constructions in general and allows us to reconstruct their history more precisely.