

## Morphological encoding of NPs and information structure in Beserman Udmurt

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The primary object of our research is the NP with dependents in the Beserman dialect of Udmurt. Specifically, we are interested in NPs headed by full-fledged nouns (not relational nouns / inflected postpositions) that have a nominal or an adjectival dependent. Our research is based on corpus and elicitation data gathered in the field in 2003-2017.

Nominal categories in Beserman Udmurt include number, case, and possessiveness. There are several constructions that can be employed to form an NP with a dependent. These constructions differ in which of these markers attach to the head and the dependent and how the dependent has to agree with the head. We explore these constructions and argue that the choice is governed primarily by the referential status of the nouns and information structural factors.

In the case of a nominal dependent, there are two main strategies: juxtaposition, whereas the dependent is not marked for any nominal category, and the genitive construction (see 1 and 2). Both constructions can encode a wide range of possessive relations between the head (possessee) and the dependent (possessor).

(1) l'itofka            nêd  
      scythe            handle  
'scythe handle'

(2) Van'a-len        kâšno-jez  
      PN-GEN        wife-P.3(SG)  
'Vanya's wife'

The first construction puts very strict constraints on the dependent. The dependent hardly can be interpreted as referential; it cannot be the antecedent of an anaphoric pronoun; nothing (not even a clitic particle) can be inserted between the head and the dependent. Thus, it can be interpreted as (pseudo-)incorporation in terms of Dayal (2003). On the other hand, the second construction allows for much freedom. The dependent can be moved to the right of the head; the phrase can be split even by long constituents, as in (3), and is indeed split in about 50% of cases in the corpus.

(3) Mênam        šätëm        përm-e            marê-m-e,        perepeč'-e.  
      I.GEN        ugly        turn.out-PRS.3SG        HES-P.1SG        pie-P.1SG  
'My pies somehow turn out ugly.'

One could argue that what we are dealing with are in fact two NPs rather than one. However, we argue that this is normally not true, based on the choice of the case on the dependent (2nd genitive when the head is in the DO position) and the agreement between the dependent and the possessive marker on the head.

NPs with adjectival dependents allow for three different constructions: with no markers on the dependent regardless of the case/number of the head (the default one), with adjectival plural marker *-eš'* on the dependent, and with the possessive marker on the dependent (4). The latter requires agreement with the head in case and number, but

only the 3SG possessive marker can be present on the dependent, as can be seen from the example.

(4) kyz-z-e / \*kyz-d-e kor-d-e uli-ja-z pun  
thick-P.3(SG)-ACC / ...-P.2(SG)-ACC log-P.2(SG)-ACC bottom-ILL-P.3(SG) put:IMP  
'The thick log, put it beneath.'

Just as with the constructions with nominal dependents, these three constructions differ in how much freedom they allow in terms of moving the dependent away from the head.

Our corpus-based research shows that the choice of the construction depends on the referential status of the head and the information structure of the utterance.

1. The juxtaposition construction is the default choice for non-specific topical NPs both in case of nominal and adjectival dependents.

2. The genitive construction and the construction with the adjectival plural marker is more characteristic for definite or weak definite heads when the whole NP or at least a part of it is in the focus. Discontinuous NPs, at least in some languages, are topicalized and then either head or dependent is focalized; in Ntelitheos (2003) it was shown for Greek. For Beserman this is true: topical dependent is usually removed to the right of the head. In groups of the type N-Gen N and Pro-Gen N heads and dependents are also divided by the boundary between topic and focus. Groups N-Gen N-Poss, Pro-Gen N-Poss and Adj-*eš'* N with standard word order (the head immediately follows the dependent) are focal. This observation explains why the information structure is a major factor when choosing one of several available constructions: since topicalization often requires that the topicalized part of the NP be moved to the periphery, the head and the dependent should bear markers that indicate the presence of a syntactic relation between them. While the juxtaposition constructions do not have such markers, the genitive and the adjectival plural constructions do.

3. The construction with P.3SG-bearing adjective is used when the dependent is contrastive or emphasized (it is a common trait of Volgaic languages, see Nikolaeva 2004). In this case, the head is normally topical. When its topicality is greater than a certain threshold, it could be elided, and in that case the construction allows recovering information about the syntactic position of the elided head from the dependent.

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