

On debitive nominalization in Moksha Mordvin

1. Introduction

The purpose of my talk is to give an account of the predicative use of the *-ma* nominalization in Moksha Mordvin. The material was collected during my field research in the village of Lesnoe Tsibaevo, Republic of Mordovia, Russia, in 2015 and 2016. Besides, I am using a corpus of articles published in the newspaper *Mokshen' Pravda*, which contains approximately 4000 instances of the form under investigation.

2. Noun properties of the *-ma* form in its different uses

The suffix *-ma* in Moksha Mordvin is used to derive nominals from verbs. The resulting form has some syntactic properties of a noun, e.g. it may be modified by adjectives and adjoin the definiteness marker *-s'*:

- (1) viškə mora-ma-s' tejə-nzə miša-nd-aj
 strong sing-NZR-DEF PRON.DAT-POSS.3SG disturb-IPVF-NPST.3SG
 'Loud singing will disturb him/ her.'

The *-ma* form is also used in predicative position to convey the meaning of necessity. It is often used to provide instructions:

- (2) kaftə čast-tə mel'ə šejεŋ-n'ə s'ej-ənd'-əma-t pr'ε-s' pez'-əma
 two hour-ABL after hair-DEF.PL comb-IPFV-NZR-PL head-DEF wash-NZR
 'Two hours later one should comb one's hair and wash it.'

In most descriptions (Chudaeva 1953, Bubrikh 1953) this predicative use of the *-ma* form is analyzed as an equative construction 'X is Y' where X (subject) stands for the direct object of the verb and Y (predicate) stands for the *-ma* nominalization. For instance, according to (Chudaeva 1953), the literal meaning of (3) would be 'He/ she is an invitation as a guest':

- (3) son t'erd'-əma konak-əks
 3SG invite-NZR guest-TRANSL
 'He/ she is to be invited as a guest'

However, I will show that in predicative position the *-ma* form does not exhibit the nominal properties that the *-ma* nominalization used as a propositional argument of the verb does. The results are summed in Table 1:

	Argument use	Predicative use
Possessive suffixes	+	-
Definiteness marking	+	-
Nominal modifiers (adjectives, demonstratives)	+	-
Copula used in the past tense	<i>ul'əms</i> , suffixal <i>-l'</i>	suffixal <i>-l'</i>
Direct object position	mainly before the <i>-ma</i> form	mainly after the <i>-ma</i> form

Table 1. Syntactic properties of the *-ma* form in its argument and predicative uses

3. Participant marking and agreement patterns

The *-ma* form is derived from both transitive and intransitive verbs. The subject of the verb always receives dative marking in the *-ma* form:

- (4) s'ora-n'ε-t'i luvə-ma t'ε kn'iga-t'
 guy-DIM-DEF.SG.DAT read-NZR this book-DEF.SG.GEN
 'The boy has to read this book.'

The object may be promoted to the nominative position and it may trigger agreement on the *-ma* form, as in (2). However, it is not always the case (4).

The participant marking in the sentence containing the *-ma* form provides further evidence against the synchronic equative analysis. The *-ma* form may have no direct object and it need not promote an existing object to nominative to yield a grammatical sentence.

4. Animacy restrictions

The *-ma* form shows some syntactic restrictions on the animacy of the participants: the dative participant tends to be perceived as animate or more animate than the accusative/ nominative participant.

First, the dative participant must have a will of its own, i.e. it cannot be a human artifact that a human uses for a certain purpose:

- (5) *šl'apa-t'i van-ft-əma štobə af-əl' ul'-ə ši-n' εɣ't'ə-ma
 hat-DEF.SG.DAT watch-CAUS-NZR COMP NEG-PQP be-CN sun-GEN strike-NZR
 intended: 'A hat should protect [one's head] so that one does not get a sunstroke'

Second, if both participants are expressed by personal pronouns, the dative participant must be higher on the animacy scale (Silverstein 1976):

- (6) mon'-d'ejə-n n'ingə uč-əma-t ton
 1SG.OBL-PRON.DAT-1SG.POSS still wait-NZR-NPST.2SG you
 'I also have to wait for you'
- (7) ??t'ejə-nzə n'ingə uč-əma-t ton
 1SG.OBL-PRON.DAT-3SG.POSS still wait-NZR-NPST.2SG you
 'He also has to wait for you'

Sources

Bubrikh, D.V. *Istoricheskaya grammatika erzyanskogo yazyka*. The historical grammar of Erzya. Saransk, 1953

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