

## Ablative(-partitive) case in Mordvinic. Occurrences with mental verbs of cognition

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One of the main functions of the ablative-partitive case in Mordvinic (Erzya: *-do/-d'e* and Moksha: *-da/-ta*) is to mark the second argument of transitive verbs. However, its occurrence is limited to some transitive verbs, namely verbs of ingestion and some low transitivity verbs, see ÈK:84 MKM:64-65.

Beyond object marking, the AP, as in most Uralic languages (Tamm 2014:97), covers a variety of other meanings, often related to the original separative function. According to Grünthal (forthcoming) the Mordvinic AP displays both spatial and non-spatial functions, showing more conservative functional features as compared to Finnic languages. Nonetheless, while in Erzya the use of the AP to indicate a spatial relation seems limited to some fixed expressions (i.e. *kudo-do kudo-s* house-ABL house-ILL ‘from house to house’), in Moksha it occurs, in the secondary coaffixal forms *ezda* ‘POSTP:ABL’, to compensate the relative (the default case denoting ‘direction from’), see (1). Thus, the use of the AP to express spatial relations seems more developed and functional in Moksha.

(1) Moksha

*T'ä s'orma-s' P'et'ä-n' ezda, i kandəz' son' is'ak.*

this letter-DEF.NOM P.-GEN PP:ABL and carry-PST.3PL>3SG 3SG.GEN yesterday

‘This letter is from Peter; it was delivered yesterday’ (LM\_brat\_2018:19)

Among low transitivity verbs, the AP in Moksha seems to be restricted as compared to Erzya. Indeed, only in Erzya the AP object is found with mental verbs of cognition in association with the topic of mental activity or state, see (2), as well as with verbs as *kortams* ‘to say’, denoting the topic of discussion, see GMJa (1962:122), ÈKS:66.

(2) Erzya

*Kelej lavša langa ud-it' Vaša at'a-ñ pokš ćora-t'ne, siñ a*

broad shelf on sleep-PRS.3PL V. father-POSS:1SG.GEN big son-PL.DEF 3PL NEG

*sod-it' zijan-do-ñt'.*

know-PRS.3PL accident-ABL-DEF

‘The older sons of Vasja’s father were asleep on a broad shelf; they did not know about the accident.’

While the verb [E] *ars'ems* 'to think' is almost always associated to an AP object, with other verbs as [E] *sodams* 'to know' or [E] *stuvtoms* 'to forget', the occurrence of the AP is only one of different possibilities in the object marking. Indeed, partitives often participate in semantic motivated alternations with other cases marking the same syntactic argument, particularly in the Finnic languages, see Luraghi and Huumo (2014:7). Interestingly, in Mordvinic, with cognitive verbs the semantic alternation between AP and other cases seems related to a modification in the verbal semantics, i.e. 'know (something)' vs 'know about /be informed'. In other words, the use of the AP concerns the specific mental relation between verbal arguments, rather than particular object features.

In Moksha, the fact that the AP does not occur with the object of cognitive verbs is to be considered in relation to a stronger connection with the original spatial function. Indeed, the AP, in the postpositional form, may occur with a spatial-separative function also with a cognitive verb, for example with [M] *sodams* 'to know' in (3).

(3) Moksha

*In'əkuj-t' - gimna-tnə-n' ezda soda-sa-s'k – sis'əm pr'ä-nza*

snake-DEF.GEN hymn-PL.DEF-GEN PP:ABL know-PRES-1PL>3SG seven head-POSS:3SG.GEN

'The snake has seven heads. We know that from the poems' (Moksha-2007\_4\_104-117)

Moreover, Mordvinic AP may be morphologically definite or indefinite. With verbs of ingestion the indefinite AP, (4) a., expresses an indefinite quantity of a generic object while the definite AP, (4) b., refers to an indefinite quantity of a specific referent. See also Kiparsky (1998:303).

(4) Erzya

a. *Son śim-ś čaj-d'e.*

3SG drink-PST.3SG tea-ABL

'S/he drank/was drinking tea.' (Alhoniemi 1991: 21)

b. *Son śim-ś t'e vina-do-ńt'.*

3SG drink-PST.3SG this liquor-ABL-DEF

'S/he drank/was drinking (of) this liquor.' (Alhoniemi 1991: 21)

The structure presented in (4) b. occurs widely with verbs of cognition, both with or without a quantifier; see (2) and (5), while the occurrence of indefinite APs seems very restricted with this kind of verbs in Erzya.

(5) Erzya

*t'e loman-d'e-nt' soda-tano alamo*

this person-ABL-DEF know-PRS.1PL little

‘Of this person we know little > We know little about this person.’(Syatko-2006\_2\_54-86)

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