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## EXPRESSION OF DEFINITENESS AND INDEFINITENESS OF THE DIRECT OBJECT IN THE MORDVIN LANGUAGES

Dž. Kijekbajev's article "О грамматической категории определенности и неопределенности в урало-алтайских языках"<sup>1</sup> devotes much attention to the definite accusative and the indefinite accusative case-forms, i. e. to the expression of the definiteness and the indefiniteness of the direct object. There are numerous references to and examples of the expression of definiteness and indefiniteness in the Fenno-Ugric languages as well. But there is not a single reference to the Mordvin languages; it is only at the end of the article, for the sake of comparison, and moreover quite out of place, that one example each from the Erza-Mordvin and the Moksha-Mordvin language is given.

The absence of examples from the Mordvin languages in the above-mentioned article is justified because the ways of expressing definiteness and indefiniteness are quite different in Mordvin, and unlike those that the author of the article tries to ascribe to all the Fenno-Ugric languages.

In distinction from the other Fenno-Ugric languages, in Mordvin definiteness is expressed by morphological means, i. e. with the help of a special particle *-сь* (*-ś*), which is added to the stem of the noun. The particle *-сь* corresponds to the article in the West-European languages, e. g. the Erza-Mord. *кудо-сь* corresponds exactly to the German *das Haus* or the English *the house*; the Moksha-Mord. *шпа-сь* corresponds to the German *der Tisch* or the English *the table*. Indefiniteness is indicated by the zero-form, i. e. by the absence of the particle *-сь* expressing definiteness, e. g. the Erza-Mord. *кудо* corresponds to the German *ein Haus* or the English *a house*; the Moksha-Mord. *шпа* corresponds to the German *ein Tisch* or English *a table*.

The sign of definiteness *-сь* is joined to the stem of the nominative singular. In the oblique case-forms, i. e. in declension, it changes. Thus, in Mordvin two types of declension exist: definite and indefinite. The sign of definiteness for the plural is the particle *-не* (*-ńe*), added to the form of the plural of the indefinite declension, e. g. Erza-Mord. *кудот-не* 'the houses (-those)', Moksha-Mord. *шпат-не* 'the tables (-those)'.

In their origin both signs are demonstrative pronouns: *-сь*<sup>2</sup> from *се* (Moksha-Mord. *ся*) 'that' and *-не* from *не* 'those'. Therefore, their function,

<sup>1</sup> СФУ I 1965, pp. 237—244.

<sup>2</sup> As a spelling variant, with the stems ending in *-н* and *-нь* (*-n* and *-ń*) instead of *-сь* (*-ś*), *-ць* (*-čś*) is used in Moksha-Mordvin.

analogous to that of the definite article in the West-European languages, can hardly cause any surprise. For this reason all the ways, such as word-order, intonation, stress, etc., listed by Dž. Kijekbajev as means of expressing the definiteness or the indefiniteness of the direct object have nothing to do with Mordvin. The grammatical sign of definiteness or its absence point to this. Besides, special objective verb-forms in Mordvin point to the definiteness of the direct object; in addition, the case-form of the definite and the indefinite object is also different.

Now, it is necessary to state briefly the peculiarities of the expression of the definiteness and the indefiniteness of the direct object in Mordvin. A case-form that depends on directly-transitive verbs, or a case-form with a special manner of formation, such as the accusative in the Udmurt or the Komi languages, does not exist in Mordvin. The multiplicity of case-forms serving to express the direct object that cannot and must not be reduced to one case-form, say to the accusative, is characteristic of many Fenno-Ugric languages.

D. V. Bubrich introduces the accusative into the case system "for pedagogical reasons".<sup>3</sup>

The direct object in Mordvin has a double form: it may be either in the nominative or in the genitive. The difference in use of these two forms in Mordvin depends on the expression of definiteness and indefiniteness. Some Fenno-Ugric scholars pointed out that the rise of the case-forms of the objects was connected with the widening of the functions of the other cases. E. g. the genitive when expressing definiteness plays the role of the form of the direct object, while the nominative becomes the form of the indefinite direct object.

The aspect and voice meanings of the verb and their formal signs (the objective forms of the verb) depend on the presence or the absence of the direct object in a sentence.

One of the most widespread and characteristic of the Mordvin ways of expressing the definiteness of the direct object is its being in the genitive. Taking the form of the genitive, the direct object indicates a thing more concretely and definitely. The verb-predicate stands in the form of the objective conjugation in such sentences if semantically it expresses a completed action, e. g. Erza-Mord. *Охотникесь кундызе нармунень ды кандызе кудов* (М. Е. Евсевьев, Эрзянь ёвкст, Москов 1928, p. 14) 'The hunter (-that) caught (he — it) a bird and brought (he — it) it home'; *Ромка шлясь седе курок, тенсизе кияксонть, лакавтсь чай аванстэнь* (Сятко 1965 2, p. 78) 'Romka washed quickly, swept the floor, boiled the tea for his mother'; Moksha-Mord. *Маринка сявозе аканиц кядьста шаванянь, каясь лощца и ушедсь Зонькаты симдема* (Сяськома 1949, p. 132) 'Marinka took (she — it) the cup from her sister, poured out some milk and made Zonka drink it'.

The direct object may be provided with the sign of definiteness, i. e. it may be put in the genitive even when it is connected with non-objective verbs. In such a sentence the action may also be interpreted as expressing an incomplete action. With non-objective verbs accompanied by a direct object, the idea of the completeness of an action is realised only by the meaning of the utterance, e. g. *сёрмадынь сёрманть* may be interpreted as 'I have written the letter (-that)' or as 'I wrote the letter (-that)', but *сёрманть сёрмадыя* may be interpreted only as 'I have written the letter (-that)'. Thus, with verbs having special objective

<sup>3</sup> Д. В. Бубрих, Эрзя-мордовская грамматика. Минимум, Саранск 1947, p. 9.

endings and indicating a completed action the direct object is always in the genitive of the definite declension. With non-objective verbs the direct object may take forms according to the definite or the indefinite declension. If a direct object indicates an object in a general way without referring to it as a thing that is little known to the speaker, it is in the nominative of the indefinite declension and the verb-predicate takes non-objective forms in spite of the fact that the verb may express a completed or a non-completed action, depending on the character of the utterance, e. g. *вешемс лескс* 'to ask for help', *кандомс столь* 'to bring a table'.

A direct object expressed by the nominative of the possessive declension is definite, as a rule. Grammatical means definite for every possessive series indicate an object that is known to the speaker as an object belonging to a given person. A direct object with possessive suffixes may be replaced by a noun in the definite declension without practically any change in meaning, e. g. *цёрам пек вецкса* 'I like my son very much' may be replaced by the sentence *цёранть пек вецкса* 'I like the son (I — his) very much', etc. All these shades of meaning exist already in the semantics of the noun and do not depend on the relation in which a given noun stands to the verb within the limits of a given sentence.

An object expressed by the proper name of a person or by the name of a thing as well as by a pronoun except *мезе* (plural *мезть*) 'what' is always concrete in its meaning and definite, therefore it is used in the genitive, e. g. Erza-Mord. *учомс Машань* 'to wait for Masha', *иля меляв-то, сень топавтса* 'don't worry, I'll do that', Moksha-Mord. *кизефтемс Петянь* 'to ask Peter', *вятемс тонатнень* 'to lead those'.

An object expressed by a substantivised part of speech is always logically known already, definite, and, therefore, it is put in the genitive, e. g. Erza-Mord. *сасамс омбоценьть* 'to catch up with the second', *кучомс одонть* 'to send the young'.

The nominative of the definite declension may be used in the function of a direct object with the infinitive in *-мс* (*-ms*), e. g. Erza-Mord. *бути те виресь ютамс?* 'shall we go through this forest?', *формась савсь оршамс* 'this uniform had to be put on'. In the Moksha language both the nominative of the indefinite declension and the nominative of the definite declension are used in this case, e. g. *Ваня ашезе сода, кода кирдемс пря* (or *прат*) 'Vanja didn't know how to behave'. With the infinitive in *-ма* (*-ma*) in the Moksha-Mord. language a direct object in the nominative of both the definite and the indefinite declension may be used, e. g. *аф юмафтума вирьса кись* 'not to lose one's way (-that) in the forest', *карман азондома ёвкс* 'I'll tell a fairy-tale'.

In Mordvin the direct object may be expressed by the ablative. But the number of nouns which are used in the ablative is restricted; in this case the direct object designates a substance, which is used for food, drink, no matter whether a definite or an indefinite substance is meant, e. g. *симемс ведтеньть* 'to drink part of the water', *ярсамс кишиденть* 'to eat part of the bread'.

The direct object in the ablative designates part of some substance. The verb expresses a non-completed action in such sentences. If the direct object designates the whole of the substance used for food, it is in the genitive of the definite declension. In this case the verb expresses a completed action, e. g. *симемс веденть* 'to drink the water' (but not 'to drink water'), *сэвемс кишинть* 'to eat the bread' (but not 'to eat bread').

In the system of cases of the direct object the inessive may also appear. Nowadays, it does not occur in the Mordvin literary languages. Instead

of it the genitive of the definite declension is used with the postposition *эйсэ*, e. g. *симдян лишметнень эйсэ* 'I am making horses (-those) drink', *ловнан книганть эйсэ* 'I am reading the book'. The fact that the genitive with the postposition *эйсэ* is used instead of the inessive in the literary language does not change things at all, for the postpositional construction with *эйсэ* has exactly the same meaning as the inessive. But in dialects the use of the direct object in the inessive is rather widespread, e. g. in the Alatyr Region dialect studied by F. P. Markov. In that dialect the inessive whenever used always takes the form of the definite declension, e. g. *ки олкнесэ уски?* 'who is taking in the straw?', *розь нуйматнесэ прядыть* 'they are finishing harvesting the rye'. The direct object may be expressed by the inessive of the possessive declension which also appears to be definite, e. g. *три эйкашосонзо* 'he is bringing up his children'. The direct object in the inessive expresses a non-complete inclusion of the object by the action. The verb with a direct object in the inessive expresses the incompleteness of the action. The inessive of the indefinite declension may also appear in the role of a case-form of the direct object. This happens only when the direct object is expressed by a pronoun or by the proper name of a person or a thing which are always definite in meaning.

On the basis of what has been said above we come to the following conclusions:

1. In Mordvin definiteness and indefiniteness are expressed morphologically by special particles which correspond in meaning to the definite and indefinite articles in the West-European languages.

2. Therefore, the definiteness or the indefiniteness of the direct object are expressed in corresponding cases of the definite or the indefinite declension.

3. Different case-forms are used to express the direct object not for the designation of definiteness or indefiniteness (for they are expressed morphologically), but for the designation of the different meanings of the direct object itself: the complete or the incomplete inclusion of the direct object by the action or other connotations.

4. The use of many case-forms to express the direct object in Mordvin reminds us, to a certain degree, of the case-form expression of the direct object in Finnish.

All this goes to show that attempts to find special ways of expression for the definiteness and indefiniteness of the direct object (word-order, stress, etc.) such as those undertaken by Dž. Kijekbajev are unjustified in the case of Mordvin.

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#### ВЫРАЖЕНИЕ ОПРЕДЕЛЕННОСТИ И НЕОПРЕДЕЛЕННОСТИ ПРЯМОГО ОБЪЕКТА В МОРДОВСКИХ ЯЗЫКАХ

В отличие от других финно-угорских языков в мордовских определенность выражается морфологическим способом: в единственном числе к основе имени прибавляется частица *-сь*, во множественном числе частица *-не* прибавляется к форме множественного числа неопределенного склонения. Оба показателя по своему происхож-

дению — указательные местоимения. Кроме того, на определенность прямого объекта указывают особые объектные формы глагола; падежное оформление определенного и неопределенного объекта также различно.

Неопределенность выражается нулевой формой, т. е. отсутствием показателя определенности *-сь*.

Прямое дополнение в мордовских языках в основном выражается именительным и родительным падежами. Это различие определяется выражением определенности и неопределенности. Один из наиболее распространенных и характерных для языка способов выражения определенности прямого дополнения — употребление его в генитиве.

Кроме того, прямое дополнение в мордовских языках может выражаться аблативом. Но круг имен, употребляющихся в аблативе, узок: прямое дополнение в указанном падеже обозначает предмет, употребляемый в пищу, питье независимо от того, определенный или неопределенный предмет оно означает.

Иногда прямой объект выражен инессивом. В литературном языке теперь он не встречается. Вместо него употребляется генитив определенного склонения с послелогом *эйсэ*. В диалектах же употребление прямого объекта в инессиве весьма распространено.

Различные падежи прямого объекта употребляются для обозначения его различных значений: полный и неполный охват предмета действием и другие оттенки.