Moksha is a Finno-Ugric language (Uralic language family) spoken in Mordovia, Russia.

This study concerns morphosyntax of causative formation in the Moksha language, namely the one that is formed by the causative suffix -ft-. It is the only productive morphological way to convey the causative meaning in Moksha.

The suffix -ft- can apply to both intransitive and some transitive verbs, although the marking of arguments in these cases is different.

The data has been gathered during fieldwork in Mordovia.

Semantics

The suffix -ft- forms a verb with broad causative semantics: depending on context, it can:

- express factitive, permissive, curative meanings (+ assistive meaning with the verbs of motion)

(1) d’dɛc jaka-ft-ɛɛ’ ait-ɛɛ’ sad-ga.

Mother is talking to the child in the garden.

1. Mother made the child walk in the garden.
2. Mother let the child walk in the garden.
3. Mother asked the child to walk in the garden.
4. Mother walked the child in the garden.

- express direct or indirect causation

(2) d’dɛc s’ta-ft-ɛɛ’ c’ora-nc.

Mother is talking to the child in the garden.

Mother picked up her son.
2. Mother woke up her son (possible context: “by calling him on the phone”)

- take any type of causee – animate (including non-agentive, “accidental causers”) and inanimate (including SC)

(3) son’ s’ma-cə kɛctə-master-t crab

He arrived cause me to clean the floor.

- take any type of causee – animate (including non-agentive, “accidental causers”) and inanimate (including SC)

(4) kala-də-mə lək’ta-ft-ɛɛ’ maśina-t.

The broken engine caused the car to stop.

- take any type of causee – animate (including non-agentive, “accidental causers”) and inanimate (including SC)

(5) ar’tisć af naroč puba-ft-ɛɛ’ kuj-ɛɛ’ kɛctə-van-t.

The artist accidentally caused the snake to bite the audience member.

In causative constructions the word kɛctə functions as a postposition. However, it maintains some of the noun properties.

Namely, it can sometimes attach possessive markers triggered by proper names (which is impossible for other postpositions and typical for nouns in possessive NPs).

(13) son kora-t ‘ɛs-adoma tama’ marta-nize.

He talk-PL.SG Vasya-GEN with-3SG.POSSG.

(14) Pin-t’ s nola-t’ brad-azə-n’-n’.

The dog licked jam off my brother’s hand.

(15) mon šta-ft-ɛɛ’ ‘ɛs-adoma.

I wash-CAUS-3SG.O poss.book-DEF.GEN the dishes-DEF.GEN.

The word kɛctə is also grammaticalized as the marker of...

- the source with the verbs of transferring possession

(16) son s’ev-ɛɛ’ jarkam kɛctə-n.

He took money from me.

(17) son ana-t’ pr’s d’dɛc-n’.

He asked his mother for the permission to read the book.

- the agent in the constructions with the resultive participle (in some idioms)

(18) Ok’kniga-ɛɛ’ luv-t’ book-DEF.GEN read-PTCP.RES Brad-azə-n’-n’ kɛctə.

The book is read by my brother.

References