

Marking Causée in Moksha

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Introduction

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'ed'ε-c jaka-ft-əz'ə it'-t' sad-ga.
mother-3SG.POSS.SG walk-CAUS-PST.3SG.O.3SG.S child-DEF.SG.GEN garden-PROL
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'ed'ε-c st'a-ft-əz'ə c'ora-nc.
mother-3SG.POSS.SG stand.up-CAUS-PST.3SG.O.3SG.S son-3SG.POSS.SG.GEN
1. *Mother picked up her son.*
2. *Mother woke up her son* (possible context: “by calling him on the phone”)

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

- (3) son' sa-ma-c šta-ft-əz'ə kectə-n master-t'
he.OBL arrive-NZR-3SG.POSS.SG clean-CAUS-PST.3SG.O.3SG.S hand.EL-1SG.POSS floor-DEF.SG.GEN
His arrival caused me to clean the floor.
- (4) kaladə motor-s' lotka-ft-əz'ə mašina-t'.
broken engine-DEF.SG stop-CAUS-PST.3SG.O.3SG.S car-DEF.SG.GEN
The broken engine caused the car to stop.
- (5) art'isc af naroč pupa-ft-əz'ə kuj-t' kectə van-i-t'.
artist.DEF.SG NEG on.purpose bite-CAUS-PST.3SG.O.3SG.S snake-DEF.SG.GEN hand.EL look-PTCP.ACT-DEF.SG.GEN
The artist accidentally caused the snake to bite the audience member.

Moksha ‘ft’-causative

Intransitive verbs

Any intransitive verb can form a causative by attaching the suffix **-ft-**. There are no restrictions on predicate type, kind of subject or anything else.

In these causative constructions the causee is marked by genitive case – this is one of the regular ways to mark DO in Moksha. Direct objects can trigger verbal agreement in number and person, and in such cases the causative agrees with the causee.

- (6)
a. venč-s' vaja-s'.
boat-DEF.SG sink-PST.3SG
The boat has sunk.
- b. mon vaja-ft-in'ə venč-t'.
I sink-CAUS-PST.3SG.O.1SG.S boat-DEF.SG.GEN
I have sunk the boat.

- (7)
a. mon' st'ər-n'ε-z'ə rabota-j oš-sə.
I.OBL daughter-DIM-1SG.POSS.SG work-NPST.3SG city-IN
My daughter works in the city.
- b. mon rabota-ft-in'ə st'ər-n'ε-z'ə-n' oš-sə
I work-CAUS-PST.3SG.O.1SG.S daughter-DIM-1SG.POSS.SG.GEN city-IN
I made my daughter work in the city.

Thus the (Comrie 1976) principle of causee marking works here: *the causer takes the subject position and the causee is moved down to the highest free position in grammatical relations hierarchy (Sub>DO>IO>Obl)*.

Transitive verbs

The causative **-ft-** cannot attach to a transitive verb with the non-agentive subject (except for fairy-tale contexts).

- (8) *pr'estupn'ik-s' s'εz'-ft-əz'ə
criminal-DEF.SG blow.up-CAUS-PST.3SG.O.3SG.S
kut'-t' bombə-n' kectə.
house-DEF.SG.GEN bomb-GEN hand.EL
The criminal caused the bomb to blow up the house.

If the original subject is agentive, it is removed from the subject position and marked by a special marker, *kectə* (not, as (Comrie 1976) principle would suggest, by Moksha IO case, dative, or any other case).

- (10) mon šuv-ft-in'ə lotk-t'
I dig-CAUS-PST.3SG.O.1SG.S hole-DEF.SG.GEN
brad-əz'ə-n' kectə.
brother-1SG.POSS.SG.GEN hand.EL
I made my brother dig a hole.

“*Kectə*” is the elative case form of the noun *ked* ‘hand’ (literally ‘from the hand’). For more details on *kectə* see the column on the right.

The original DO in such causative constructions remains as it was – marked by genitive case or with no marking at all.

The causative of a transitive verb agrees with the original DO and not with the causee.

- (11) d'ed'ε-z'ə luv-ft-əz'ə
mother-1SG.POSS.SG read-CAUS-PST.3SG.O.3SG.S
kectə-n kniga-t'.
hand.EL-1SG.POSS book-DEF.SG.GEN
My mother made me read the book.

The causee marked by *kectə* can be easily omitted – such constructions are interpreted as causative with unspecified causee.

- (13) Mon s'olk-ft-in'ə kenkš-t'.
I close-CAUS-PST.3SG.O.1SG.S door-DEF.SG.GEN
I made someone close the door.

Kectə

In causative constructions the word *kectə* 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 korta-j vas'ε-n' marṭə/*marṭə-nzə.
he talk-NPST.3SG Vasya-GEN WITH with-3SG.POSS
He is talking to Vasya.
- (14) Pin'ε-s' nola-z'ə brad-əz'ə-n'
dog-DEF.SG lick-PST.3SG.O.3SG.S brother-1SG.POSS.SG-GEN
kectə/kectə-nzə var'en'jə-t'.
hand.EL hand.EL-3SG.POSS jam-DEF.SG.GEN
The dog licked jam off my brother's hand.
- (15) mon šta-ft-in'ə vas'ε-n'
I wash-CAUS-ST.3SG.O.1SG.S Vasya-GEN
kectə/OKkectə-nzə pasuda-t'.
hand.EL hand.EL-3SG.POSS the.dishes-DEF.SG.GEN
I made Vasya wash the dishes.

The word *kectə* is also grammaticalized as the marker of...

- the source** with the verbs of **transferring possession**

- (16) son s'εv-s' jarmak kectə-n.
he take-PST.3SG money hand.EL-1SG.POSS
He took money from me.
- (17) son ana-s' pr'ε d'ed'ε-nc
he ask-PST.3SG head mother-3SG.POSS.SG.GEN
kectə luv-əm-s kn'iga.
hand.EL read-INF-ILL book
He asked his mother for the permission to read the book.

- the agent** in the constructions with the **resultive participle** (in some idiolects)

- (18) OKkn'iga-s' luv-f
book-DEF.SG read-PTCP.RES
brad-əz'ə-n' kectə.
brother-1SG.POSS.SG-GEN hand.EL
The book is read by my brother.

References

Comrie 1976 — B. Comrie. “The syntax of causative constructions: Cross-language similarities and divergences”. In: Shibatani (ed.), *Syntax and semantics*, vol. 6, pp. 261-312, 1976.

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