The split in nominal paradigms and the size of extended nominal projection in Moksha[1]

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1. This paper deals with noun declension in Moksha (Mordvin, Finno-Ugric). The main claim is that nominal paradigm in Moksha has the split in case system with respect to structural/lexical case opposition. This opposition plays a decisive role in availability of different nominal φ-feature sets within a nominal word-form. Thus, the structural and lexical cases in Moksha differ not only in their licensing and syntactic properties (as in Marantz 1981; Sirguðsson 1989; Pesetsky et al. 1995) but in an amount of structure that can be projected within a given phrase. The work is based on the assumption that that nominal phrases with less structure (xNPs) may coexist with DPs within one language (Pereltsvaig 2006, Pereltsveig, Lyutikova 2015) and that the sequence of functional projections for xNP is mirrored in a sequence of nominal suffixes (cf. mirror principle, Baker 1987). As it has been shown in (Pleshak, Toldova, Volkova 2017), the following projections are relevant for the structural cases in Moksha: KP > DP > PossP > NumP > NP, while only PossP > OblP > NP are relevant for Oblique cases. In my presentation I discuss the difference in the feature sets for these two structures and the difference in syntactic behaviour of corresponding word-forms within a clause.

2. **Moksha nominal system**. The Moksha language has up to 17 cases (the number differs through different reference grammars), two numbers (singular vs. plural) and three declension types: basic (or indefinite), possessive and definite one. However, the full nominal paradigm does not include the forms for all the possible combinations of these categories. The following constraints are relevant:

- basic (indefinite) declension has all 17 possible cases;
- definite declension has only three possible cases (Nominative, Genitive and Dative);
- possessive declension has nine cases.

The difference in case system for indefinite vs. definite paradigm is illustrated in table 1.

Case	basic		definite	
	SG	PL	SG	PL
Nom	∅	-t / -t’	-s’	-(t’)n’ə
Gen	-ən’ / -ən’n’ə		-t’	-(t’)n’ə-n’
Dat	-ən’d’i		-t’i	-(t’)n’ə-n’d’i
Abl	-də / -tə / -d’ə / -t’ə			
Iness	-sə			

Table 1. Definite vs. basic paradigm

Thus, the set of cases splits into three categories: (1) Nominative and Genitive (and Dative); (2) Ablative, Inessive, Elative, Illative, Prolative, Caritive; (3) Traslative, Causalis, Lative and others. Type 3. includes “non-canonical” cases attached to bare nominal stems, no φ-features such as number or person can be expressed with these forms.

3. **Case set 1**. These are Nominative, Genitive and Dative. The first two are structural cases for Subject and Direct Object (DO). Genitive is also assigned to SpecDP by Spec-Head agreement (referential possessors, Subjects in DP or definite complements of postpositions). Dative is an inherent case assigned to indirect objects and Goals. They are compatible with a full-fledged set of morphological affixes expressing such nominal categories as referentiality (definiteness / possessivity) and number:

(1) *maša and-əz’-**n’ə*** ***t’ɛ kolmə***[??] ***kolmə t’ɛ*** *[KP[DP[NumP[NP katə-n’ɛ]-t’]-n’ə]-**n’]]***
Mary feed-PST.**O**-**3PL.O**[SG.S] this three three this cat-dim-PL-DEF-GEN
‘Mary fed these three kittens’.

The possessor affixes are incompatible with the definiteness suffix. However, both types of affixes (definite and possessive) trigger object agreement (as in (1)). Moreover, the D-like elements such as demonstratives (*t'ɛ* 'this'), universal quantifiers require the marker of definite declension on the noun (cf. (1)).

As for syntactic behaviour, DPs with definiteness markers disallow left branch extraction (the evidence in favour of D-layer according to Bošković’ 2008):

(2) **ravžə mon sud'ər'ɛ-jn'ə traks-t’*
black I stroke-PST.3.O.1SG.S cow-DEF.SG.GEN
Int.: ‘I gave the black cow a pat’.

Passive construction targets only Nominative and Accusative arguments (cf. ex.(3a) vs. (3b), where Agent is in Dative and the theme is in Nominative):

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(3)a. *Pet'ɛ* *s'ɛvəl'-əz'ən'* *vet'ə* *mešok-n'ən'*
Peter.**NOM** take-3SG.S-3PL.O five sack-**DEF.PL.GEN**
'Peter takes five sacks'

b. *P'et'ɛ-n'd'i* *s'ɛv-əv-i* *t'ɛ* *mešok-s'*
Peter-**DAT** take-PASS-PR.3SG this sack-**DEF.SG.NOM**
'Peter takes five sacks (is able to take)'

The non-referential nominals (without definiteness or possessive markers) are not capable to have overt marking in DO position and to trigger the DO agreement on the verb.

4. Case set 2: xNPs in oblique cases lack number distinction. They are incompatible with the plural marker (*-t*) and cannot attach definite declension affixes.
As for projections for oblique cases, it is assumed within many theoretical approaches that locative cases have even more structure than the structural ones. However, in Moksha the oblique case-marked xNPs lack the definiteness features. Though they are compatible with demonstratives they lack definiteness marking on the head. However, they are compatible with possessive affixes. Moreover, there are constructions with DPs that are parallel to the oblique xNPs, unspecified for referentiality. In case one needs to mark the definiteness of a DP overtly a corresponding construction with the postposition *es-* is used: definite DP + *es*-CM:

(5)a. *mon pel'-an t'ɛ traks-**t'*** ***ezdə*** / b. *traks-tə*
afraid-NPST.1SG this COW-DEF.SG.GEN in.ABL COW-ABL
'I am afraid of this cow / a cow (cows).'

5. Case set 1. vs. case set 2.
To sum up, (a) there is the difference in possibility to express φ-features within a word-form for structural cases vs. oblique cases: the latter lack number and referentiality markers.
(b) The possessive affixes in structural cases precede case markers, in oblique they follow them (cf. (4a) for oblique vs. (4b) for structural cases)

(4) a. *sumka-**zə-nzə*** b. *sumka-**nzə-n*** c. *sumka-snə*
bag-**ill-3sg.poss** bag-**3sg.poss.pl-gen** bag-**3pl.poss.pl-gen**
'to her/their bag' 'her bag' 'their bag'

(c) In structural cases the possessive marker system has one more distinction. The number of possessor is expressed within a possessive morpheme: cf. (4b) vs. (4c). According to Serebryanikov (Serebryanikov), the additional forms for type1 cases is a result of merging a possessive affix with one of the demonstratives. This can be a source of "more" referential potential for possessive forms in Nominative-Genitive-Dative and serve additional evidence for the fact that oblique possessive phrases are lower in the xNP structure, than non-oblique.
6. Conclusions. Moksha has a tripartite case system. The tree case types differ in possible φ-features set, morpheme ordering, referential properties, syntactic properties of xNPs within clause (the manner of case assignment, the possibility of agreement triggering on the verb etc.). This difference can be accounted for the fact that they allow maximal xNP projection of different size. Moksha data serves an evidence that non-semantic vs. semantic cases can differ in amount of functional structure. Only the structural cases are specified for definiteness, they are full DPs.

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