Subject-marking in non-finite verb structures in Meadow Mari

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This paper focuses on subject-marking strategies in passive participle constructions (marked with *-me/-mo/-mö*, hereafter *-mO*) in Meadow Mari. The subject is generally marked with the genitive (1), but nominative (2) marking is also common (cf. Kangasmaa-Minn 1966: 169-183, Shagal 2018: 63).

(1) Meadow Mari (Brykina & Aralova 2012: 477)

[**Tud-ən** ilə-me]   pört   jər   šuko peledəš   ul-o.

  3SG-GEN live-PTCP.PASS house   around many   flower   be-PRS.3SG

'Around the house in which he lives, there are a lot of flowers.'

(2) Meadow Mari (Sebeok & Ingemann 1961: 27)

[**lum** tol-mə-m]   bučaš   tüŋal-ət.

snow come-PTCP.PASS-ACC wait.INF begin-3PL

'They began to wait for the snow's coming.'

Meadow Mari shows DSM (Differential Subject Marking, de Hoop & de Swart 2008) in *-mO* non-finite clauses, and my research aims at providing an explanation for the variation. Brykina and Aralova (2012: 488) claim that in Meadow Mari participial constructions the marking of the subject of the embedded clause depends on its semantic properties. Based on data elicited from native speakers, they found that genitive marking is accepted with subjects denoting: a) personal pronouns, b) other pronouns, c) proper names, d) animate, human, e) animate, non-human, and f) inanimate entities. They assume that only the latter two types can appear in the nominative, but their results could not prove the existence of nominative-marked subjects expressing animate, human entities.

I claim that i) animate, human subjects can also receive nominative marking, ii) that all the semantic categories introduced by Brykina and Aralova (2012) can get genitive marking in Meadow Mari, and ii) animacy is not the only factor motivating the variation according to corpus data.

I conducted a small-scale corpus research using the Meadow Mari version of the KORP infrastructure (Borin et al. 2012) to investigate the occurrence and the frequency of nominative and genitive subjects in the *-mO* construction.

In KORP, I found 713 sentences in which the participle acts as an attribute and the noun (its actor) receives the genitive marking, and 636 with nominative subjects. Nominative subjects

seem common with nouns denoting non-human entities and intransitive verbs (3). In a set of 22 randomly selected sentences that contain a relative embedded clause with a nominative subject, 17 has an intransitive verb. Human subjects and proper names can also appear in the nominative paired with an intransitive verb.

(3) Meadow Mari (KORP)

Ala-kušto [**ṕij** optï-mo]   jük   šokt-a.[1]

somewhere dog bark-PTCP.PASS voice   to be heard-PRS.3SG

'Somewhere dog barking is heard.'

Genitive subjects seem widespread with pronouns, human entities and transitive verbs.

(4) Meadow Mari (KORP)

Lenin da [**tudï-n**   vujlatï-ḿe] Kommunist partij onč̂ĵko onč̌-jen-ə̂t.

Lenin and 3SG-GEN lead-PTCP.PASS communist party   forward looks-PST2-3PL

'Lenin, and the Communist Party he led, looked ahead.'

Preliminary results thus show that subject-marking strategies can possibly depend on a set of intertwining factors, such as animacy, the transitivity and semantics of the verb and dependency relations.

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[1] Data from KORP have been transcribed by the Transcription and transliteration tool of the COPIUS programme, available here: https://www.copius.eu/trtr.php?lang=mhr