Case & agreement puzzle in Moksha debitive

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Talk layout

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Moksha

Uralic > Finno-Ugric > Mordvin > Moksha
Relevant facts:

- Differential object marking (DOM) (two series of case markers: DEF/INDEF, subject and subject-object conjugation);
- definite accusative and definite genitive are marked identically;
- non-finite verb forms are made with the *-əm* suffix and can be sentential arguments, nominalizations and **debitives**.

Debitive construction

Moksha debitive is a dative-infinitive construction; meaning – deontic necessity (Zakirova 2018).

(1) *pet'ɛ-n'd'i* *tu-ma* *kud-u*
P.-DAT go-NZR house-LAT

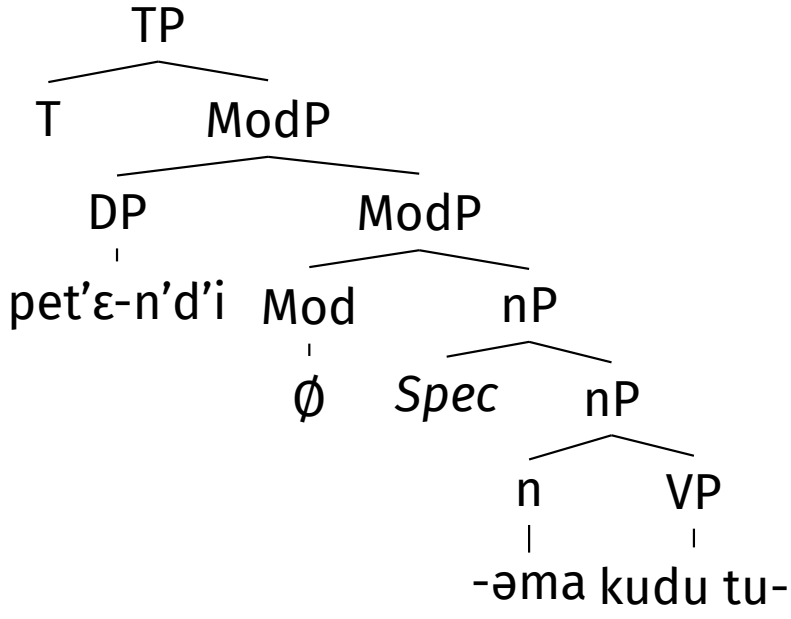
'Pet'a needs to go home.'

(2) *wit'a-n'd'i* *kn'iga-t'n'ə* *luvə-ma-t*
W.-DAT book-DEF.PL read-NZR-NPST.3PL

'Wit'a needs to read the books.'

Structure of the debitive

I propose a null modal verb. Dative-infinitive constructions have received similar treatment in other languages (Burukina 2020, Marušič et al. 2006).



Why a modal?

The arguments in favour of the null modal analysis:

1. The nominalization is not a nominal predicate modifying the IA;
2. There are two possible scopes of negation;
3. The modal can be modified by adverbs.

Nominal predicate?

Hypothesis: the debitive's nominalisation is a nominal predicate modifying the DEF.NOM-marked IA (false)
Unmarked 3PL subjects of nominal predicates can't control plural agreement. In finite clauses and the debitive they can.

	debitive	**nominal predication**
∅	OK	OK
agree	OK	*

Table: Agreement with unmarked 3PL, debitive and nominal predication

Negation scopes

There are two possible scopes of negation.

(3) *mon'-d'eja-n* ***af*** *mol'a-ma* *škola-v*
I.OBL-PRON.DAT-1SG.POSS **NEG** go-NZR school-LAT

'I do not have to go to school (I might though).' NEG > ∀
'I can't go to school (I am not allowed)' ∀ > NEG

Adverbs

The modal can be modified by an adverb (e.g. *pɛk* ‘very’).

(4)

mon’-d’eja-n	*s’im-əma*	***pɛk***	*t’ɛ*	*tabletka-s’*
I.OBL-PRON.DAT-1SG.POSS	drink-NZR	**very**	this	pill-DEF.SG

‘I really need to take this pill’

So, there is a null modal in the matrix clause.

Case marking

External argument of the nominalised verb is dative.

(5) *mon’-**d’ejə**-n* *ud-əma*
I.OBL-**PRON.DAT**-1SG.POSS sleep-NZR

‘I need to go to sleep.’

Case marking

The internal argument has three case options: DEF.NOM, DEF.GEN and no marking. Case marking in finite clause or nominal domain is different.

(6) *pid'-əma jam/ jam-s'/ jam-t'*
cook-NZR cereal cereal-DEF.NOM cereal-DEF.GEN

'It's necessary to cook some cereal.'

Case marking	**EA**	**IA**
Finite clause	DEF.NOM, ∅	DEF.GEN, ∅
Nominalization	DEF.GEN	GEN
Debitive	DAT	DEF.GEN, DEF.NOM, ∅

Table: Case marking of internal and external arguments in Moksha transitive clauses

Agreement

The debitive exhibits personal agreement with its IA (7).

(7) ***min'*** *was'ft'ə-ma-**tamə*** *pot'ma-sə*
we meet-NZR-**NPST.1PL** Pot'ma-LOC

'It's necessary to meet us in Pot'ma.'

The external argument does not control agreement (8). The agreement morphology is verbal, near-identical to subject conjugation.

(8) *mon'-d'eja-n* *ud-əma*
I.OBL-PRON.DAT-1SG.POSS sleep-NZR

'I need to sleep.'

Agreement and case

The DEF.NOM argument always controls agreement (if it is 3PL). Agreement with a DEF.GEN argument is prohibited. Agreement with the unmarked PL is optional.

(9) a. *wit'a-n'd'i* *kn'iga-**t'n'ə*** *luvə-ma-*(t)*
W.-DAT book-**DEF.NOM.PL** read-NZR-NPST.3PL

'Wit'a needs to read the books.'

b. **wit'a-n'd'i* *kn'iga-**t'n'ən'*** *luvə-ma-t*
W.-DAT book-**DEF.GEN.PL** read-NZR-NPST.3PL

'Wit'a needs to read the books.'

(10) *mon/* *??mon'* *sn'imand-əm-an*
I/ I.GEN photograph-NZR-NPST.1SG

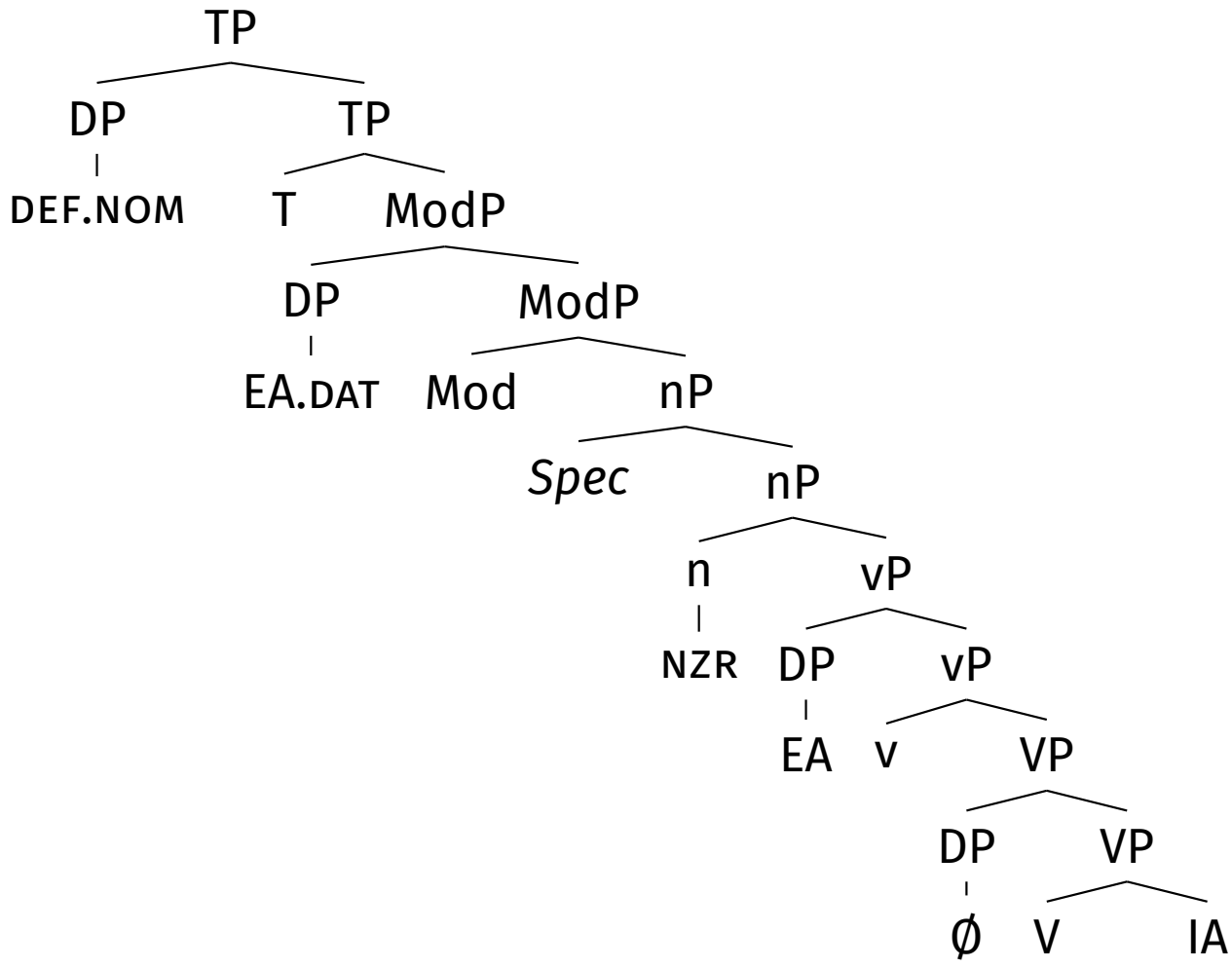
'I need to be photographed.'

Questions

i. Why can the internal argument be marked with both the ‘subject’ and the ‘object’ cases?
ii. Why are there verbal agreement markers on a nominalization?
iii. Why are these subject conjugation markers, when the agreement is with the IA?

Proposal

The IA can move to the matrix subject position as well as stay in the embedded clause, and that is how the case marking and agreement patterns are derived.



A-dependencies

There can be two A-dependencies between the clauses (the external and the internal argument).

- **Hypothesis i**: the dative obligation holder controls the embedded PRO (false)
  Hypothesis i would make movement of the IA to the matrix clause impossible, and 'object' PRO is nonexistent (Martin 2001).
- **Hypothesis ii**: the dative EA is moved out of the embedded clause (maybe true)
  Movement of both arguments is OK.

Case discrimination

According to Preminger 2014, agreement is case-sensitive – whether an NP can control agreement is determined by a rule in (11).

(11) $FIND_{\phi}(f)$
Given an unvalued feature f on a head H^0, look for an XP bearing a valued instance of f. Upon finding such an XP, check whether its case is acceptable with respect to case discrimination:

a. *yes* $\rightarrow$ assign the value of f found on XP to H^0

b. *no* $\rightarrow$ abort $FIND_{\phi}(f)$

If a case on the Moravcsik hierarchy can control agreement, all cases above it can.

(12) *The Moravcsik hierarchy* (second and final revision; Bobaljik 2008)
unmarked case > dependent case > lexical/oblique case

Case discrimination

The pattern in Moksha: nominative controls subject agreement, genitive does not. Based on the Moravcsik hierarchy and general observations, Moksha case hierarchy in the verbal domain, after Marantz 2000, is this (tentatively):

i. lexical case – DAT
ii. dependent case – DEF.GEN
iii. unmarked case – DEF.NOM
iv. default case – ∅

Regardless of how the operations are timed or whether there is a clause boundary, **we can't derive both definite genitive and definite nominative for the internal argument**. The dative EA has lexical case, so the remaining argument cannot receive dependent case. But what is it is in a nominal domain?..

Possible positions of the IA

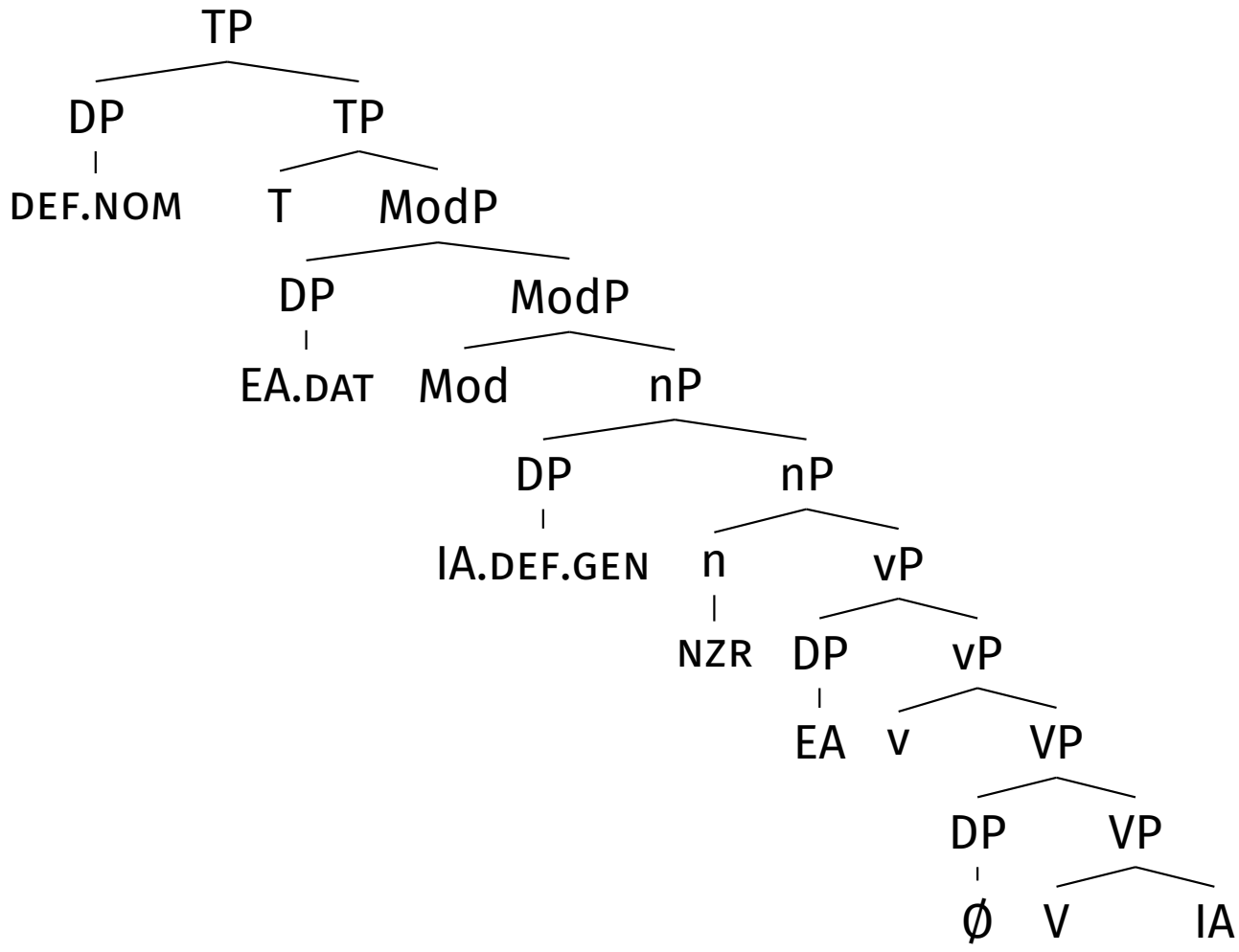
The internal argument can have three different positions:

Position	**Expected case marking**	**Domain**	**Agreement**
embedded VP	unmarked/default case	verbal	none
matrix modal verb argument	unmarked case	verbal	verbal
nP dependent	unmarked case	nominal	possessive

Table: Different positions of the internal argument

Embedded VP & matrix TP

If the IA stays where it was base-generated (in the verbal domain), it remains unmarked (∅), since the EA's trace bears lexical case.
Matrix Spec, TP is the only position where DEF.NOM is possible.



Nominalisation possessor

Moksha event nominalisations have genitive dependents and possessive agreement. They can also attach case markers.

(13) *s't'ər'-n'ɛ-t'* *l'ɛm-ən'* *pid'-əma-c* *zan'ɛ-s'*
girl-DIM-DEF.GEN soup-GEN cook-NZR-3SG.POSS.SG take-PST[3SG]
kaftə *čast-t*
two hours-PL

'The girl's cooking of the soup took two hours' (Zakirova 2018)

The debitive never attaches possessive/case markers, only verbal agreement and tense (IMPF marker *-l'*).

Nominalisation possessor

Both GEN and DEF.GEN can mark nominal dependents, also possessive suffixes sometimes appear on the head. Why is there no GEN option and never a possessive marker on the debitive? Below are all the marking options for Moksha possessives:

1. dep head
2. dep-GEN head
3. dep-GEN head-POSS (proper name heads only)
4. **dep-DEF.GEN head** (oblique case heads only)
5. dep-DEF.GEN head-POSS (Pleshak 2015)

Plausible explanations are:

A. The debitive's nominalisation is in an oblique case (or something of the same effect)

B. No possessives/GEN-dependents with an NP head
Hypothetical premises:
   - Head-∅ iff Head is smaller than DP
   - Dependent.GEN iff Head is a DP

Answers

i. **Why can the internal argument be marked with both the 'subject' and the 'object' cases?**
   Because of its two possible positions in the structure (matrix subject and, well, somewhere else).
ii. **Why are there verbal agreement markers on a nominalization?**
   From the presence of a null modal verb.
iii. **Why are these subject conjugation markers, when the agreement is with the IA?**
   The IA controls agreement only when it is in the matrix subject position.

Appendix

		SG	PL
INDEF	**NOM**	∅	
	GEN	-ən’(n’ə)	-t/-t’
	DAT	-ən’d’i	
DEF	**NOM**	-s’/c’	-(t’)n’ə
	GEN	-t’	-(t’)n’ə-n’
	DAT	-t’i	-(t’)n’ə-n’d’i

Table: Case marking paradigm (non-locative cases only)

Appendix

	SG	PL
1	-n	-tamə
2	-t	-tadə
3	∅	-t

Table: Personal agreement on the debitive

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