

## MARI (CHEREMIS) RELATIVE CLAUSES\*

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I. Mari (Cheremis) is a verb-final language and, like many other verb-final languages, makes use of pronominal relative clauses.<sup>1</sup> For example, given the simplex sentence (1), one can form six different relative clauses shown as (2) - (7):

- (1) Sergej Čavajn 1930 ij-əšte tide pölem-əšte tide pera dene  
 year-loc this room-loc this pen with  
joltaš-əž-lan kužu serəš-əm voze-n kolte-n<sup>2a</sup>  
 friend-3s-dat long letter-acc write-ger send-pII  
 'S. Chavain wrote (and sent) a long letter to his friend with this pen in this room in 1930'
- (2) 1930 ij-əšte tide pölem-əšte tide pera dene joltaš-əž-lan  
 year-loc this room-loc this pen with friend-3s-dat  
kužu serəš-əm voze-n kolta-šo pisatel'  
 long letter-acc write-ger send-SP writer  
 'the writer who wrote a long letter to his friend with this pen in this room in 1930'
- (3) Čavajn-ən 1930 ij-əšte tide pölem-əšte tide pera dene  
 -gen year-loc this room-loc this pen with  
joltaš-əž-lan voze-n kolta-mo serəš-əže  
 friend-3s-dat write-ger send-OP letter-3s  
 'the letter which Chavain wrote to his friend with this pen in this room in 1930'
- (4) Čavajn-ən 1930 ij-əšte tide pölem-əšte tide pera dene  
 -gen year-loc this room-loc this pen with  
kužu serəš-əm voze-n kolta-mo joltaš-əže  
 long letter-acc write-ger send-OP friend-3s  
 'the friend to whom Chavain wrote a long letter with this pen in this room in 1930'
- (5) Čavajn-ən 1930 ij-əšte tide pölem-əšte joltaš-əž-lan kužu  
 -gen year-loc this room-loc friend-3s-dat long  
serəš-əm voze-n kolta-mo pera-že  
 letter-acc write-ger send-OP pen-3s  
 'the pen with which Chavain wrote a long letter to his friend in this room in 1930'

(6) Čavajñ-ən 1930 ij-əšte tide pera dene joltaš-əž-lan kužu  
 -gen year-loc this pen with friend-3s-dat long  
serəš-əm voze-n koltə-mo pölem-že  
 letter-acc write-ger send-OP room-3s  
 'the room in which Chavain wrote a long letter to his friend  
 with this pen in 1930'

(7) Čavajñ-ən tide pölem-əšte tide pera dene joltaš-əž-lan  
 -gen this room-loc this pen with friend-3s-dat  
kužu serəš-əm voze-n koltə-mo ij-že<sup>ab</sup>  
 long letter-acc write-ger send-OP year-3s

As far as (2) - (7) are concerned, Mari relative clause formation can be represented as follows:<sup>3</sup>

(8) a)  $S[NP_i \dots V]_S NP_i \implies S[\emptyset \dots V-\underline{SE}]_S NP$   
 b)  $S[NP \dots NP_i\text{-case} \dots V]_S NP_i \implies$   
 $S[NP\text{-gen} \dots \emptyset \dots V-\underline{mE}]_S NP\text{-px}$

where case stands for a case suffix or postposition and px for a possessive suffix. The subscript i is a coreference marker. Of the two NPs with a coreference marker, that which is outside the embedded sentence is the head NP and that which is inside is the relative NP. As in Japanese and Turkish, the relative NP is generally deleted along with the case suffix (or postposition) when the embedded sentence is changed into a surface relative clause.<sup>4</sup> The possessive suffix attached to the head NP in (8b) agrees in number and person with the subject of the embedded sentence, which is changed into the genitive in the course of relative clause formation.

II. Keenan and Comrie (1977) formulated the Accessibility Hierarchy on the basis of data from about fifty languages. It expresses "the relative accessibility to relativization of NP positions in simplex main clauses":

(9) Subject > Direct Object > Indirect Object > Major Oblique  
 Case NP > Genitive NP > Object of Comparison

That the higher three positions are relativizable in Mari is shown by (2) - (4). In what follows I will discuss the relativizability of the lower three positions.

According to the authors, Major Oblique Case NPs are "NPs that express arguments of the main predicate, as the chest in John put the money into the chest rather than ones having a more adverbial function like Chicago in John lives in Chicago or that day in John left on that day." The distinction they made between "arguments" and "adverbials" seems to be superfluous at least as far as relative clause formation in Mari is concerned. In the first place, as I will show below, and as is incidentally shown by (5) - (7), there seems to be no significant difference in relativizability between the two alleged classes of oblique case NPs. Secondly, as I will show later, genitive NPs expressing possessors are generally more difficult to relativize than oblique case NPs in general. Thus "arguments" and "adverbials" seem to form one group of non-genitive

oblique case NPs and occupy the position before the Genitive NP on the Accessibility Hierarchy.

The standard grammar of Mari lists three local case forms: mestnyj (locative or inessive), napravitel'nyj (illative) and obstojatel'stvennyj (lative). With the postposition gəč, which compensates for the lack of the relative, they form the series of inner local cases. The postpositions dene, deke, deran and deč, in their turn, can be regarded as the system of outer local cases. Local case NPs are generally relativizable:

(10) Locative: see (6) and (7).

(11) Illative:

a) tunemše-vlak teŋgeče Tartu ola-ške mije-n-ət  
 pupil-pl yesterday town-ill go-pII-3p  
 'The pupils went to Tartu yesterday'

b) tunemše-vlak-ən teŋgeče mija-me ola-št  
 pupil-pl-gen yesterday go-OP town-3p  
 'the town the pupils went to yesterday'

(12) Lative:

a) Jəvan kođšo rušarnja-n peš kugu kagaz-eš šūžar-žə-m  
 past Sunday-adv very big paper-lat sister-3s-acc  
stretle-n  
 draw-pII  
 'Ivan drew a picture of his younger sister on a very large piece of paper last Sunday'

b) Jəvan-ən kođšo rušarnja-n šūžar-žə-m stretlə-me  
 -gen past Sunday-adv sister-3s-acc draw-OP  
kagaz-še  
 paper-3s  
 'the paper on which Ivan drew a picture of his younger sister last Sunday'

(13) The postposition gəč:

a) Jəvan vŭta gəč kok imə-m lukt-ən  
 shed out of two horse-acc take out-pII  
 'Ivan let two horses out from the shed'

b) Jəvan-ən kok imə-m luk-mo vŭta-že  
 -gen two horse-acc take out-OP shed-3s  
 'the shed from which Ivan let two horses out'

(14) The postposition dene: see also (5).

a) Jəvan kođšo təlzə-šte joltaš-əž dene il-aš tŭŋal-ən  
 past month-loc friend-3s with live-inf begin-pII  
 'Ivan began to live with his friend last month'

- b) Jəvan-ən kođšo təlza-šte il-aš tūŋal-me joltaš-əže  
 -gen past month-loc live-inf begin-OP friend-3s  
 'the friend with whom Ivan began to live last month'

(15) The postposition deke:

- a) Jəvan teŋgeče tide joltaš deke una-la mije-n  
 yesterday this friend to guest-adv go-pII  
 'Ivan visited this friend yesterday'
- b) Jəvan-ən teŋgeče una-la mija-me joltaš-əže  
 -gen yesterday guest-adv go-OP friend-3s  
 'the friend Ivan visited yesterday'

(16) The postposition deran:

- a) Jəvan tide kniga-m kəzət-eš joltaš-əž deran kode-n  
 this book-acc now-lat friend-3s to leave-pII  
 'Ivan left this book with his friend for the time being'
- b) Jəvan-ən tide kniga-m kəzət-eš koda-mo joltaš-əže  
 -gen this book-acc now-lat leave-OP friend-3s  
 'the friend with whom Ivan left this book for the time being'

(17) The postposition deč:

- a) Jəvan šušaš təlza-šte joltaš-əž deč lekt-ən kaj-aš  
 coming month-loc friend-3s from go out-ger go-inf  
šon-a  
 think-3s  
 'Ivan is thinking of leaving his friend and moving out next month'
- b) Jəvan-ən šušaš təlza-šte lekt-ən kaj-aš šona-mo  
 -gen coming month-loc go out-ger go-inf think-OP  
joltaš-əže  
 friend-3s  
 'the friend from whose home Ivan is thinking of moving out next month'

NPs are relativizable also with postpositions like voktene, nergen and počeš, which are semantically more lexical than those discussed so far:

- (18) a) Jəvan izi-ž godsek Jul voktene il-a  
 small-3s since Volga beside live-3s  
 'Ivan has lived on the Volga since he was a child'
- b) Jəvan-ən izi-ž godsek ila-me eŋer  
 -gen small-3s since live-OP river  
 'the river on which Ivan has lived since he was a child'

- (19) a) Javan tide kniga nergen tengeče doklad-əm əšt-əš  
 this book about yesterday report-acc do-pI  
 'Ivan made a report on this book yesterday'
- b) Javan-ən tengeče doklad-əm əštə-me kniga-že  
 -gen yesterday report-acc do- OP book-3s  
 'the book on which Ivan made a report yesterday'
- (20) a) Javan tengeče joltaš-əž deč nal-me recept počeš  
 yesterday friend-3s from get-OP recipe according to  
boršč-əm jamdale-n  
 borsch-acc prepare-pII  
 'Yesterday Ivan cooked borsch according to the recipe  
 he had gotten from his friend'
- b) tengeče boršč-əm jamdale-me recept-šə-m Javan  
 yesterday borsch-acc prepare-OP recipe-3s-acc  
joltaš-əž deč nal-ən  
 friend-3s from get-pII  
 'The recipe according to which he cooked borsch yester-  
 day, Ivan got from his friend'

III. There are two syntactically distinct classes of genitive NPs in Mari. Adapting the terminology of Kangasmaa-Minn (1966, 1969) I will call them direct and indirect genitive NPs:

(21) The direct genitive NP:

tide marij-ən vata-že japon  
 this man-gen wife-3s Japanese  
 'This (Mari) man's wife is a Japanese'

(22) The indirect genitive NP:<sup>5</sup>

tide marij-ən japon vata-že ulo  
 this man-gen Japanese wife-3s exists  
 'This (Mari) man has a Japanese wife'

One can draw a complete analogy between Mari and Turkish here. In (21) tide marij-ən vata-že 'this man's wife-his' is a constituent or a Mari version of *izafet*, whereas tide marij-ən japon vata-že 'this man's Japanese wife-his' in (24) is not a constituent.

While direct genitive NPs are indisputably identified with Genitive NPs of the Keenan-Comrie framework, it is unlikely that indirect genitives are Genitive NPs. Rather, indirect NPs behave like subject NPs with respect to relative clause formation: they are relativized by means of (8a) rather than (8b). In each of the following  $\bar{B}$  constructions, substitution of the mE participle for the šE participle leads to ungrammaticality:

- (23) a) tide marij-ən šuko japon kniga-že ulo  
 this man-gen many Japanese book-3s exists  
 'This (Mari) man has a lot of Japanese books'
- b) šuko japon kniga-že ul-šo marij  
 many Japanese book-3s be-SP man  
 'a (Mari) man who has a lot of Japanese books'
- (24) a) tudo kugəza-n kodšo ij-ən ik ūdər-žö jom-o  
 that old man-gen past year-adv one girl-3s disappear-pI  
 'That old man lost a daughter last year'
- b) kodšo ij-ən ik ūdər-žö jom-šo kugəza  
 past year-adv one girl-3s disappear-SP old man  
 'the old man who lost a daughter last year'
- (25) a) vatak-marijak-ən sar ertə-mek ik ergə-št vele kod-ən  
 wife and man-gen war pass-ger one son-3p only remain-pII  
 'When the war was over, the couple had only one son left'
- b) sar ertə-mek ik ergə-št vele kod-šo vatak-marijak  
 war pass-ger one son-3p only remain-SP wife and man  
 'the couple, who had only one son left after the war'
- (26) a) tudo kugəza-n južgunam oŋ-žo čot koršt-a  
 that old man-gen at times chest-3s heavily ache-3s  
 'That old man sometimes feels a sharp pain in his chest'
- b) južgunam oŋ-žo čot korštə-šo kugəza  
 at times chest-3s heavily ache-SP old man  
 'an old man who sometimes feels a sharp pain in his chest'
- (27) a) ola-se kalək-ən kində-št u ij marte vele  
 town-adj people-gen bread-3p new year until only  
sit-a  
 suffice-3s  
 'The townspeople's bread will suffice only until the New Year'
- b) kində-št u ij marte vele sitə-še ola-se kalək  
 bread-3p new year until only suffice-SP town-adj people  
 'the townspeople whose bread will suffice only until the New Year'
- (28) a) Jəvan-ən möŋgəštə-žö žap-əm ertarə-mə-že šu-eš  
 -gen at home-3s time-acc spend-OP-3s reach-3s  
 'Ivan wants to spend his time at home'

- b) möŋgəšta-žö žap-əm ertara-mə-že šu-šo jeŋ  
 at home-3s time-acc spend-OP-3s reach-SP person  
 'a person who wants to spend his time at home'
- (29) a) tudo kugəza-n üdar-žö jom-mə-lan köra  
 that old man-gen girl-3s disappear-OP-dat owing to  
uš-əžö kaje-n  
 reason-3s go-pII  
 'That old man went mad because he had lost his daughter'
- b) üdar-žö jom-mə-lan köra uš-əžö kaje-še  
 girl-3s disappear-OP-dat owing to reason-3s go-SP  
kugəza  
 old man  
 'the old man who went mad because he had lost his daughter'
- (30) a) vatak-marijak-ən 1960 ij-əšte kokəmšo joča-št  
 wife and man-gen year-loc second child-3p  
šoč-ən  
 be born-pII  
 'The couple had their second child in 1960'
- b) 1960 ij-əšte kokəmšo joča-št šoč-šo vatak-marijak  
 year-loc second child-3p be born-SP wife and man  
 'the couple who had their second child in 1960'

Although these examples clearly show that indirect genitive NPs are rather easy to relativize, it remains to be solved how to interpret and explain their subjectlike behavior under relativization.<sup>6</sup>

In contrast to the facility of the relativization of indirect genitives, relativizability of direct genitives or Genitive NPs proper is a rather moot issue. One cannot say that they cannot be relativized at all, because relativization seems to be acceptable in some cases:

- (31) a) Jəvan-ən vata-že japon  
 -gen wife-3s Japanese  
 'Ivan's wife is a Japanese'
- b) vata-že japon ul-šo marij  
 wife-3s Japanese be-SP man  
 'a (Mari) man whose wife is a Japanese'
- c)\* vata-že japon ul-mo marij  
 wife-3s Japanese be-OP man

It is interesting that in another case my informant accepted relativization not only with the šE participle but also with the mE participle. Note, furthermore, that he preferred the subject joča-že 'child-his' of the relative clause to remain in the nominative rather than to be changed into the genitive (cf. 8b):

- (32) a) tide marij-an joča-že eston škol-aško košt-eš  
 this man-gen child-3s Estonian school-ill go-3s  
 'This (Mari) man's child goes to an Estonian school'
- b) joča-že eston škol-aško košt-šo marij  
 child-3s Estonian school-ill go-SP man  
 'a (Mari) man whose child goes to an Estonian school'
- c) ? joča-že eston škol-aško košt-mo marij  
 child-3s Estonian school-ill go-OP man  
 'ibid.'
- d)\* joča-že-n eston škol-aško košt-mo marij  
 child-3s-gen Estonian school-ill go-OP man

I encountered a situation similar to that reported by Keenan and Comrie.<sup>7</sup> My informant suggested three alternative ways of expressing the same intended content. The first was to avoid relativization by using the adjectivizing suffix -an:

- (33) japon vat-an marij  
 Japanese wife-adj man  
 'a (Mari) man whose wife is Japanese'

This suffix reminds one of the suffix -ed in such words as blue-eyed, long-haired, good-natured, etc., though its use is less restricted than the latter's. The second alternative was to use a postnominal, often extraposed, relative clause introduced by the interrogative pronoun-adjective kudo:

- (34) marij-am pale-m, kuda-n joča-že eston škol-aško  
 man-acc know-1s which-gen child-3s Estonian school-ill  
košt-eš  
 go-3s

'I know a (Mari) man whose child goes to an Estonian school'

This construction was introduced into the literary language after the model of Russian syntax in the late 1930s.<sup>8</sup> The third way was to use a genitive attribute in the following way:

- (35) eston škol-aško košt-šo joča-n ača-že  
 Estonian school-ill go-SP child-gen father-3s

'the father of the child who goes to an Estonian school'

This alternative seems to be the least successful, because semantic equivalence between (32b) and (35) is rather doubtful.

So far I have considered direct genitives modifying subject NPs. As to those modifying non-subject NPs, it is highly improbable that Mari can relativize them. My informant, it seemed to me, always found such constructions unintelligible and never failed to offer alternatives.

IV. At present I do not have any data from which I am able to draw any definite conclusion about the relativizability of Objects of Comparison. Seeing that their position follows that of the Genitive



NP on the Accessibility Hierarchy proposed by Keenan and Comrie, I suspect that the rather negative result on the part of Genitive NPs suggests that they are probably not relativizable. The question remains open in any case.

#### NOTES

\* This paper was written as a preliminary version of the paper which I will read in Finnish at the annual meeting of the Linguistic Society of Finland, February 7 - 8, 1981. My hearty thanks are due to Anatolij Kuklin, my informant, who checked and corrected my Mari sentences as a native speaker of the Meadow dialect of the language. It goes without saying that he is by no means responsible for any of the incorrect examples I may have used in this paper without knowing it. I may be allowed to add that this paper does not represent the final stage of my present research into Mari relative clauses, because I am expecting additional findings from my next visit to the Soviet Union scheduled for February 13 - 22, 1981.

1. Although my data covers only the Eastern literary language, I use the term Mari (Cheremis) throughout this paper. I disregard the šaš and dəmə participles, because they are used irrespective of the syntactic position of the relative NP and do not concern the pattern shown in (8). I am aware of the fact that the constructions dealt with in the present paper have not been considered to be relative constructions in the traditional grammar of Mari. To those who are against my treatment of the constructions in question, I recommend reading Hakulinen and Karlsson (1979: 368ff.), where Finnish participial attributes, which can relativize only subject and direct object NPs, are regarded as (transforms of) relative clauses.

2a. Except for the few additional letters, the Mari alphabet is the same as the Russian alphabet. Because the present paper has nothing to do with the sound system of Mari, I transliterated Mari sentences as if they were Russian with a few reservations: (1) š, ř, ö, and ŷ are represented by ə, ŋ, ö and u, respectively; (2) e is represented by e except at the word-initial and intervocalic positions, where je is used. The following is the list of abbreviations used in this paper:

acc(usative), adj(ectival suffix), adv(erbial suffix), dat(ive),  
gen(itive), ger(und), ill(ative), inf(initive), lat(ive),  
loc(ative), pl(ural);

1s = first person singular, 3s = third person singular,  
3p = third person plural;

pI = past I, pII = past II

OP = object participle = mE participle

SP = subject participle = šE participle

\* : ungrammatical expression

The final vowel represented by E of the suffixes -mE, -šE and -dəmə is subject to Vowel Harmony and realizes as e, o or ö depending on the environment.

2b. 'the year when Chavain wrote a long letter to his friend with this pen in this room'

3. The reader is warned against associating (8) with a transformational analysis of relativization because of the transformation-like notation I employed here. The present paper is not concerned with any particular way of analyzing Mari relative clauses. However, in whatever way one may attempt to analyze them, one should not neglect the apparent fact that the speaker intuitively associates relative clauses like (2) - (7) with a simplex sentence like (1). For the time being I do not know any other way of representing this intuitive association than putting it into a transformation-like formula.

4. Only rarely is the relative NP retained in the form of a possessive suffix attached to the postposition, which is left undeleted.

5. Kangasmaa-Minn (1969) lists 32 verbs occurring with "an indirect genitive adjunct to the subject" (p.36 - 37) and 12 verbs occurring with "an indirect genitive connected to the object" (p.46). Relativization of the latter type of indirect genitives seems to generally lead to unintelligibility. In this respect they can be compared with direct genitives modifying non-subject NPs.

6. It is probable that they are really subject NPs. I will not pursue this point further here.

7. Keenan and Comrie (1977: 90 - 91): "A somewhat more subtle performance preference is illustrated by the genitive position on the A[ccessibility]H[ierarchy]. Although a majority of languages in our sample possessed some way of relativizing genitives, there was often some awkwardness in doing so, and not infrequently, in specific cases, a preferred alternative was offered - one that relativizes a position higher on the AH."

8. Ivanov (1975: 195 - 97). Judging from the corpus of printed text I have gone through so far, I suspect that this type of postnominal relative construction is seldom, if ever, used nowadays. The reason for its unpopularity is not difficult to guess: such a construction violates the functional principles of verb-final languages (see Kuno 1974 and Downing 1978).

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