

## INVISIBLE NOMINAL HEADS IN POSHKART CHUVASH COMPARATIVES (AND BEYOND)

*Dmitry Gerasimov* (Institute for Linguistic Studies, Saint Petersburg)

Poshkart Chuvash<sup>1</sup>, like other Chuvash varieties and Turkic languages in general, primarily employs phrasal comparatives with fixed (Ablative) marking on the standard (1). Non-DP constituents must undergo nominalization in one way or another to function as standards of comparison; in particular, any standard involving a VP or a larger projection has its verb in the form of a past participle bearing a 3<sup>rd</sup> person possessive suffix to which the Ablative marker is then attached (2). In this talk, I argue that Poshkart Chuvash participial standards like the one in (2) are straightforwardly analyzable as relative (or noun complement) clauses headed by a covert parametric noun  $\emptyset_{deg}$ .

The so-called “past participles” in  $-n\emptyset$  are a primary means of relativization in Poshkart Chuvash. They are also extensively used in complement clauses, where they exhibit a number of nominal properties. Recently, [Dékány & Georgieva 2020, 2021] have argued that participle-nominalizer polysemy arises when the structure of deverbal nouns properly contains that of participial relative clauses, which can happen in three different configurations, depending on whether the language in question (i) employs nominalized relatives and (ii) uses mixed extended projections [Borsley & Kornfilt 2000] as arguments. Poshkart Chuvash data point towards negative setting of both parameters (which calls for nominal heads, covert or overt, in both types of clauses, as shown in [Dékány & Georgieva 2021], e.g., for Uygur): Nominative marking of subjects, no possessive or nominalizing morphology on participles in headed relatives, no restrictions on syntactic distribution of participles in complement clauses, etc. Moreover, it is possible to insert a covert noun after the participle (3a–b). A possible problem for this analysis is that at least for some speakers scrambling options appear to be different with or without a covert noun (cf. [Kornfilt 2003] for Turkish where the contrast is more pronounced), but this requires further investigation.

Likewise, participial comparatives generally allow insertion of an explicit parametric noun (4a–b). There are no cases when absence of such overt head degrades the example (as, e.g., in Mishar Tatar, where such contrasts may constitute an argument against the analysis in terms of covert nominals [Bylinina 2017: 461–462]). It is thus natural to assume that (4a) has a structure in (4c), where  $\emptyset_{deg}$  is a covert parametric noun with an abstract meaning of ‘degree’ of ‘quantity’, which takes its further semantic specification from the lexical content of the (restrictive) participial relative clause modifying it. The “participial” marker  $-n\emptyset$  attaches at a “verby” projection AspP, in line with its ability to mark main clause predicates (5).

It is also possible to treat participial standards in Poshkart Chuvash as just free relatives or in terms of head ellipsis (as proposed for Japanese *yori*-comparatives in [Beck & al. 2004] and [Sudo 2015] respectively). The predictions of the three alternatives differ very subtly, and my arguments in favor of the covert noun approach are at present somewhat theory-internal.

The analysis presented herein embraces the fact that despite their strictly phrasal syntax, Poshkart Chuvash comparatives involve comparison of degrees rather than individuals. Binding of a degree argument (in terms of [Beck & al. 2010]) is encoded rather explicitly via relativization. This talk thus aims to contribute empirically both to the parametric typology of participial clauses and to that of degree semantics in comparative constructions.

---

<sup>1</sup> This study has been supported by the Russian Foundation for Basic Research (grant No. 20-312-70009).

### Examples:

- (1) *xër atea arzin atea-ran ɛyl̥-rek*  
girl child man child-ABL tall-CMPR  
'The girl is taller than the boy'.
- (2) *və-zam pajan ɛşle-n-in-ɖzen numaj-rak kan-ateə*  
s/he-PL today work-PC\_PST-P\_3-ABL much-CMPR rest-NPST.3PL  
'Today they rest more than they work'
- (3a) *vəl gaj-n-i man-a pəzərgan-dar-tə-ə*  
s/he go.away-PC\_PST-P\_3 I-OBJ get.sad-CAUS-PST-3SG  
'That he had left saddened me'.
- (3b) *vəl gaj-nə novæc man-a pəzərgan-dar-tə-ə*  
s/he go.away-PC\_PST news I-OBJ get.sad-CAUS-PST-3SG  
'The news that he had left saddened me'.
- (4a) *jes tɛəm-n-in-ɖzen tēbe tarən-rax*  
you dive-PC\_PST-P\_3-ABL bottom deep-CMPR  
'The bottom lies deeper than you have dived to'.
- (4b) *jes tɛəm-nə tarənəz-ɛn-ɖzen tēbe tarən-rax*  
you dive-PC\_PST depth-P\_3-ABL bottom deep-CMPR  
'The bottom lies deeper than the depth you have dived to'.
- (4c) [DP [FP [AspP[*vp jes tɛəm*]-nə] F<sup>Ø</sup><sub>deg</sub>]-D*in*]-ɖzen tēbe tarən-rax
- (5) *pətja pizək kugəl̥ pəzer-nə*  
Peter big pie cook-PC\_PST  
'Peter baked a big pie'.

### Abbreviations:

3 — 3<sup>rd</sup> person; ABL — ablative; CAUS — causative; CMPR — comparative degree marker; NPST — non-past; OBJ — object (accusative/dative) case; P\_3 — 3<sup>rd</sup> person possessive/definiteness marker; PC\_PST — past participle; PL — plural; PST — past; SG — singular.

### References:

- Beck & al. 2004 — S. Beck, T. Oda, K. Sugisaki. Parametric variation in the semantics of comparison: Japanese vs. English // *Journal of East Asian Linguistics* 13, 2004. Pp. 289–344.
- Beck & al. 2010 — S. Beck, S. Krasikova, D. Fleischer, R. Gergel, S. Hofstetter, Ch. Svaelsberg, J. Venderelst, E. Villalta. Crosslinguistic variation in comparison constructions // J. van Craenenbroeck, J. Rooryck (eds.), *Linguistic variation yearbook 2009*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2010. Pp.1–66.
- Borsley & Kornfilt 2000 — R. D. Borsley, J. Kornfilt. Mixed extended projections // R. D. Borsley (ed.). *The nature and function of syntactic categories*. Leiden: Brill, 2000. Pp. 101–131.
- Bylinina 2017 — E. G. Bylinina. Sravnitel'nye konstrukcii [Comparative constructions] // S. G. Tatevosov, A. G. Pazel'skaja, D. Sh. Sulejmanov (red.). *Jelementy tatarskogo jazyka v tipologicheskom osveschenii. Misharskij dialekt* [Elements of Tatar in a typological perspective: The Mishar dialect]. Moscow: BukiVedi, 2017, fpp. 448–465.

Dékány & Georgieva 2020 — É. Dékány, E. Georgieva. Three ways of unifying participles and nominalizations: the case of Udmurt // A. Alexiadou, H. Borer (eds.). *Nominalizations: 50 years on from Chomsky's Remarks*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020, pp. 169–202.

Dékány & Georgieva 2021 — É. Dékány, E. Georgieva. The participle-nominalizer polysemy in Uralic and Turkic // Paper presented at the 6<sup>th</sup> *Workshop on Turkic and Languages in Contact with Turkic (Tu+6)*, University of Toronto, 19–20 Feb 2021.

Kornfilt 2003 — J. Kornfilt. Subject case in Turkish nominalized clauses // U. Junghanns & L. Szucsich (eds.). *Syntactic structures and morphological information*. Berlin & Boston: Mouton de Gruyter, 2003. Pp. 129–216.

Sudo 2015 – Y. Sudo. Hidden nominal structures in Japanese clausal comparatives // *Journal of East Asian Linguistics* 24, 2015. Pp. 1–51.