

Diagnosing verb clusters beyond Germanic and Hungarian

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Verb Cluster (VC) languages are characterised by variations in (unmarked) word order in multiple verb constructions (Wurmbrand 2005:5), typically associated with OV syntax. VCs have proven an empirically and theoretically rich area for investigation, both for theories of movement/derivation and for variationist work. VCs have been seen as a particular feature of (some) West Germanic languages, but are also found in Hungarian, possibly as the result of contact (É. Kiss & van Riemsdijk 2004:1). This talk investigates verb cluster effects and related phenomena in Meadow Mari, a Finno-Ugric (Uralic) language geographically and genetically remote from West Germanic, spoken on the Russian Volga. Despite having very different morphosyntactic properties, Meadow Mari verbal complexes exhibit some interesting similarities to those observed in West Germanic VCs.

Meadow Mari syntax shows typically Uralic features, including rich inflection, agglutinative morphology and null subjects. Like the West Germanic languages where VCs occur, Meadow Mari syntax is generally head-final, and SOV word order predominates in both main and finite subordinate clauses. Also typical of Uralic languages, negation is expressed as an auxiliary verb, which inflects for subject agreement and tense/mood (1).

- (1) Myj olma-m š-ym / y-ne-m koč.
I apple-ACC NEG.PST1-1SG / NEG-DES-1SG eat
'I didn't eat the apple' / 'I don't want to eat the apple'

Meadow Mari has a rich system of TAM, signalling three moods (indicative, imperative and desiderative), two past tense classes (glossed as PST1 and PST2, conditioned by evidentiality and other factors), and pair of copular auxiliaries, *y^le* and *ulmaš*, which occur clause-finally to form compound past tenses (perfect and imperfect 1 and 2). *Y^le* and *ulmaš* encode evidential mood but do not inflect for agreement or TAM. In negated sentences, the word order of the negative auxiliary with respect to the lexical verb is conditioned by TAM: in past 1 and other tense/moods (examples 2, 6 and 7), negation precedes the lexical verb; in past 2 and the perfect tenses, negation follows the lexical verb (examples 3-5). In the compound tenses with *y^le* and *ulmaš*, we see a 3-verb cluster with the word orders 3-2-1 and 2-3-1, where 1 is assumed to be the highest element in a head-final base structure (in this case *y^le/ulmaš*):

- (2) Knigam yšt vozo. (Past 1; also nonpast, imperative, desiderative)
book-ACC NEG.PAST1.3PL write
'They did not write the book'
- (3) Knigam voz-en o-g-yt-yl. (Past 2)
book-ACC write-GER NEG-PRS-3PL-be
'They (apparently) did not write the book'
- (4) Knigam voz-en o-g-yt-yl y^le. (Perfect 1)
book-ACC write-GER NEG-PRS-3PL-be be.PST1.3S
'They have not written the book'

- (5) Knigam voz-en **o-g-yt-yl** ulmaš. (Perfect 2)
 book-ACC write-GER NEG-PRS-3PL-be be.PST2
 'They (apparently) have not written the book'
- (6) Knigam **o-g-yt** vozo yļe. (Imperfect 1)
 book-ACC NEG-PRES-3PL write be.PST1.3S
 'They were not writing the book'
- (7) Knigam **o-g-yt** vozo ulmaš. (Imperfect 2)
 book-ACC NEG-PRES-3PL write be.PST2
 'They (apparently) have not been writing the book'

In the examples above, differences in verbal morphology are aligned with the two word order patterns: under NEG-V, the lexical verb is realised as an uninflected bare form, while under V-NEG, the lexical verb is a gerund and the negative auxiliary occurs with a reduced copula, *-yl* (a form of the copular verb *ul-*, which also derives *yļe* and *ulmaš*).

This talk will firstly investigate a number of parallels between these constructions and well-documented phenomena in West Germanic languages and Hungarian, in order to evaluate Meadow Mari as a potential candidate for classification as a VC language. Evidence that these verbal sequences form a unit includes the fact that VP-oriented adverbs and other constituents can precede the verbal complex but cannot normally intervene between the negation and the lexical verb, or between the lexical verb and the auxiliary (Saarinen 2015):

- (8) Kniga-m eše o-g-yt (*eše) vozo (*eše) yļe.
 book-ACC yet NEG-PRS-3PL (yet) read (yet) be.PST1.3SG
 'They were not yet writing the book'

Also explored will be the interaction of TAM features that produce these word order effects, especially the relationship between evidential mood and present perfect (PPA), and the link between PPA, word order and gerundive morphology. Similar to Hungarian and Germanic, Meadow Mari also forms complex verbal units with a set of light verbs encoding aspectual, benefactive or modal properties, plus a gerund (8). Under negation (9), the V-NEG (3-2-1) order surfaces, and the negative auxiliary intervenes between the two elements of the complex predicate:

- (9) Myj jörat-en šynd-em.
 I love-GER place-PRS.1SG
 'I fall in love'
- (10) Myj jörat-en o-m šynde.
 I love-GER NEG-PRS.1SG place
 'I do not fall in love'

Building on work on the clausal architecture for related languages (Holmberg et al 1993 for Finnish, and Julien 2015 for Saami), the NEG-V order that yields the 3-2-1 word order variant may be analysed as an instance of concatenative head movement within an articulated head-final IP through projections of the relevant TAM categories. On the other hand, it will be argued that V-NEG word order (2-3-1) requires a separate analysis where the inflected negative auxiliary incorporates V^0 . The Meadow Mari data will be discussed in relation to analyses of related phenomena in Dutch and Afrikaans.