

Direct Object marking in Mari: unmarked DOs or pseudoincorporation

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1. Unmarked Objects and Incorporation¹

One of the types of Differential Object Marking: the Direct Object can bear a case marker, or remain unmarked. Cf. Moravcsik 1978, Bossong 1985, Aissen 1998, de Swart 2007, Dalrymple, Nikolaeva 2011 e.a. The construction with the unmarked DO can show properties of incorporation, cf. Muravyova 1992, Baker 2012.

Features	Unmarked DO	Incorporated DO
Verb-adjacency	non-obligatory	obligatory
Adjectival modifiers, participles, etc.	+/-	–
Pronouns	–	–
Proper nouns	–	–
Plural marking	+/-	–
Possessive marking	+	–
Coordination	+	–
Semantics	no general restrictions	narrow scope interpretation; non-referential (cf. Farkas, de Swart 2003)

However, as shown in works on incorporation, proper nouns, plurals can be (pseudo)incorporated, cf. van Geenhoven 1998, Massam 2001, Baker 2012 e.a.

2. Unmarked Direct Object in Mari

2.1. Morphosyntactic properties

The paper presents a case-study of Differential Direct Object (DO) marking in Eastern Mari (Uralic, Finno-Ugric). I consider the syntactic and semantic features of this phenomenon giving arguments for the analysis of this phenomenon in terms of pseudoincorporation.

In Mari, the phenomenon of DO encoding is attested: the accusative marker is often present on definite NPs, while indefinites can remain unmarked.

(1) **rvez-əm** šel-m-əž-lan Pet'a-m č'ot vurs-en-ət.
boy-ACC hit-NZR-3SG-DAT Peter-ACC a.lot scold-PRT-3PL
Peter was scolded a lot for having hit the / a certain boy.

(2) **rveze** šel-m-əž-lan Pet'a-m č'ot vurs-en-ət.
boy hit-NZR-3SG-DAT Peter-ACC a.lot scold-PRT-3PL
Peter was scolded a lot for having hit a boy.

In reference grammars and special articles, definiteness is used to explain the choice of DO marking (cf. Galkin 1964, Tuzharov 1984, cf. also Wickman 1955) However, (Toldova, Serdobolskaya 2002)

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shows that definiteness is not the main factor regulating the choice of the DO marker. The information structure of the sentence is more important in Mari. The data of the research comes from fieldwork.

Morphological features of unmarked DOs

Arguments against incorporation on the word level (X⁰ level):

Vowel harmony on possessive markers:

- (3) *ergə-že – kogəl'žo – üdəržö*
son-P.3SG cake-P.3SG daughter-P.3SG
his/her son – cake – daughter

No vowel harmony in DO+V complex:

- (4) *mənam brükö urg-əm-əžo kelša*
I.DAT pants sew-NZR-P.3SG like-PRS.3SG
I like sewing pants.

Assimilation of the final vowel of the first stem and initial consonant of the second stem can happen in compounds in Mari:

e, o, ö → ə, devoiced → voiced consonant in intervocal position

- (5) *šül'ö + peč'e → šul'əveč'e*
oats fence a field of oats

No such changes in the verb with the unmarked DO:

- (6) *poŋgo pog-aš*
mushroom collect-INF
to collect mushrooms

Grammatical features of unmarked DOs:

Nominal grammatical categories: Number (Sg vs. Pl), Case, Possessives (agreeing in person and number with the possessor).

Plural number morpheme can attach to unmarked DO:

- (7) *tuvər-vlak nal-aš*
shirt-PL take-INF
to buy shirts

Possessive suffixes are possible (however, rare):

- (8) *pet'a-n kid-še muš-m-əž-əm məj už-əm.*
Peter-GEN hand-POSS.3SG wash-NZR-POSS3SG-ACC I see-PRT2.1SG
I saw Peter wash his hands.

Hence, the Mari construction is not morphological incorporation at the word level.

Syntactic properties of unmarked DO

Unmarked DO construction is not limited to a fixed set of verbs. Every (to my knowledge) transitive verb can take an unmarked DO under certain semantic conditions.

Omission of the DO marker in Mari is restricted by the following rules.

1. It is only possible in various types of non-finite clauses, cf.:

(9) a. č'odəra-šte kaj-že da **poŋg-əm** / * **poŋgo** pog-əžo.
 forest-INESS go-OPT and mushroom-ACC mushroom collect-OPT
Let him go to the forest and collect mushrooms.

b. məj č'odəra-š **poŋgo** pog-aš kaj-em.
 I forest-LAT mushroom collect-INF go-PRS.1SG
I'm going to the forest to collect mushrooms.

2. The unmarked DO has to be verb-adjacent, cf.:

(10) a. rvez-ən motor-ən **poč'elamut** lud-m-əž-lan
 boy-GEN beautiful-ADV poem read-NZR-3SG-DAT
 tun-əkt-əšo kuan-en.
 learn-CAUS-PTCP.ACT rejoice-PRT

b. rvez-ən **poč'elamut-əm** / ***poč'elamut** motor-ən lud-m-əž-lan ...
 boy-GEN poem-ACC / poem beautiful-ADV read-NZR-3SG-DAT
The teacher is glad that the boy recites poems well.

Strict verb adjacency is observed, since the basic word order is SOV, Modifier + Noun. No intervening material between the head noun and the verb (apart of particles).

Resultative PP modifying the verb must also occur before the DO (contrary to Sakha and Tamil, Baker 2012):

(11) ava joč'a-n küvar ümbak **č'əla kniška** kəšk-əm-əž-əm už-ən.
 mother child-GEN floor on all book throw-NZR-P.3SG-ACC see-PST2.3
Mother saw that the child had thrown all the books about the floor.

3. The unmarked DO can not take modifiers that serve as presupposition-inducing adjectives or pronouns (cf. Geurts 1998), i.e. restrictive adjectives, demonstrative pronouns, restrictive relative clauses, etc. (however, cf. (15))

(12) joč'a-vlak ač'a-ž-ən **tide pört-əm** / ***pört** əšt-əm-əž-əm pal-at.
 child-PL father-3SG-GEN this house-ACC house make-NZR-3SG-ACC know-PRS.3PL
The children know that their father has built this house.

4. Presupposition inducing nouns (personal pronouns, proper nouns with definite reference, nouns with possessive markers etc.) only rarely head unmarked DOs, see section 2.2.

5. It is (most often) impossible if the DO is headed or modified by indefinite expressions, e.g. indefinite pronouns.

(13) vas'a ala-mogaj **istorij-əm** / ***istorij** kalaskal-aš šon-en...
 Vasja some story-ACC / story tell-INF think-PRT.3
Vasja wanted to tell a story [I do not know what kind of story].

The rules 2, 3 and 5 seem to be easily explained if we assume that Mari Direct Object marking presents an example of incorporation. However, the following facts contradict this hypothesis.

A. Unmarked DO can be modified by various types of adjectives/pronouns (excluding the ones listed above). Cf. for the same possibility of incorporated DOs in West-Greenlandic (van Geenhoven 1998) and pseudoincorporation in Turkish (Muravyova 1994; 2008).

(14) ač'a-že erg-əž-əm tač'-əse gazet-əm / gazet nal-aš kolt-en.
 father-3SG son-3SG-ACC today-ATTR newspaper-ACC newspaper take-INF send-PRT
Father sent his son to buy today's newspaper.

(15) paša-jeŋ-vlak-ən tud-ən oškəlt-mo jük kol-m-əm vujlatəše uməl-en.
 work-person-PL-GEN he-GEN come-NZR sound hear-NZR-ACC boss guess-PRT.3
The boss guessed that the workers had heard his footsteps (lit. the sound of his coming).

Unlike Determiner Stranding by incorporation (Baker 1988, van Geenhoven 1998), the modifiers of the unmarked DO preserve all the morphosyntactic properties they have with case-marked heads: head-adjacent position, no case/number/possessive marking.

B. Unmarked DOs can be conjoined.

(16) poŋgo den saska pog-aš kaj-em.
 mushroom and berry collect-INF go-PRS.1SG
I go to collect mushrooms and berries.

C. Unmarked DOs can host numerals, quantifiers (3) and plural markers.

(17) šuko olma-m / olma kudalt-aš logal-eš.
 many apple-ACC apple throw-INF have.to-PRS.3SG
We had to throw away many apples.

D. Unmarked DOs can be headed by proper nouns and nouns with possessive markers, cf. section 2.2.

2.2. Semantics

For many languages with (pseudo)incorporation, it has been shown that the (pseudo)incorporated DO can not have wide scope interpretation (van Geenhoven 1998; Massam 2001, type 1 in Niuean; Farkas, de Swart 2003; however, see Baker 1988). However, in Mari (as well as some Turkic languages, cf. Muravyova 1994, languages of North America, cf. Baker 1988, Mithun 1984), this restriction can be violated:

Indeed, the narrow scope interpretation is the most frequent one:

(18) a. vaza šənd-əme üstel
 vase set-NZR table
a/the table to put vases on

б. vaza-m šənd-əme üstel
 vase-ACC set-NZR table
a/the table where a concrete vase has been put on

(19) a. rvez-ən ere **poč'elamut** tunem-m-əž-lan tunəktəšo kuan-en.
 boy-GEN always poem learn-NZR-3SG-DAT teacher rejoice-PRT
The teacher is glad that the boy learns poems well.

However, there is no strict ban on wide scope interpretation:

b. rvez-ən **poč'elamut** tunem-m-əž-lan...
 boy-GEN poem learn-NZR-3SG-DAT

The teacher is glad that the boy learnt a poem (a. unknown, b. the one that the teacher told him to learn the day before).

The unmarked DO can be indefinite specific and even definite:

- aforementioned

(20) tide istorij-že takšəm ške _____ odnoklassnik-šaməč' kuze vašlij-me nergen da.
 this story-3SG so REFL.GEN classmate-PL how meet-NZR about then
This story is about a meeting of my classmates.

<Two clauses.>

vot... pog-ən-en-na əle kutər-en kelš-en-na **odnoklassnik-šaməč'** vašlij-aš.
 well... collect-REC-PRT-1PLbe.3SG talk-CONV agree-PRT-1PL classmate-PL meet-INF
Well... we got together and arranged to meet our classmates.

- unique objects

(21) **keč'-əm** / **keč'e** onč'-aš jörat-əše jeŋ-vlak er kən'el-ət.
 sun-ACC sun look-INF love-PTCP.ACT person-PL early get.up-PRS.3PL
People who like to meet the sun get up early.

- proper names (some native speakers allow them to be unmarked, some do not):

(22) **jəvan** kəč'al-še rveze
 Ivan look.after-PTCP.ACT boy
the boy who was looking after Ivan

Cf. also (8) with possessive marker.

On the contrary, the accusative marked DO can also take narrow scope:

(23) urem-əšte **pərəs-əm** už-aš saj-lan ogəl.
 street-INESS cat-ACC see-INF good-DAT NEG.PRS.3SG
It is a bad sign to see a cat in the street.

Wide scope over negation and quantifiers:

(24) **pərəs** kəč'al-mu-de tudo jüd-lan omsa-m petər-en ogəl.
 cat search-find-NEG.CONV he night-DAT door-ACC close-CONV NEG.PRT.3
{He was looking for our cat.} Not having found the cat, he did not close the door for the night.

(25) **vujlatəše** vašlij-de me möngö kaj-əš-na.
 boss meet-NEG.CONV we home go-PRT2-1PL
Not having met {our} boss, we went home.

Number neutrality of singular DOs: singular DOs have ambiguous interpretation:

(26) a. pərəs-vlak-ən **kajək** kuč'-əm-əm č'əlan pal-at.
 cat-PL-GEN bird catch-NZR-ACC everybody know-PRS.3PL

However, case-marked singulars also have ambiguous interpretation:

b. pərəs **kajək-əm** kuč'-at manən č'əlan pal-at.
 cat bird-ACC catch-PRS.3PL COMPL everybody know-PRS.3PL
a.=b. Everybody knows that cats catch birds.

Quantifiers are allowed, even with partitive interpretation:

(27) **kok banka kompot-əm / kompot** koč'-m-em-lan
 two pot stewed.fruit-ACC stewed.fruit eat-NZR-1SG-DAT
ava-m mäj-əm vurs-en.
 mother-P.1SG I-ACC scold-PRT

Mother scolded me for having eaten two pots of stewed fruit (from our reserve at home).

Cf. also (11) with the universal quantifier.

In Mari, most important for the choice of DO encoding is the information structure of the sentence.

(28) – tide materjal gəč' mo-m urg-aš lij-eš?
 this cloth out.of what-ACC sew-INF possible-PRS.3SG

– **tuvər-əm / *tuvər** urg-aš lij-eš.
 shirt-ACC / shirt sew-INF possible-PRS.3SG
'What can I make of this cloth? – You can make a shirt.'

b. {What are you going to do with the underclothes?}

(29) – **vurgem-əm / *vurgem** šakal-aš kül-eš.
 underclothes-ACC/ underclothes hang-INF have.to-PRS.3SG
'I have got to hang the underclothes.'

c. – pet'a-lan [mo-m əšt-aš] kül-eš?
 Peter-DAT what-ACC do-INF should.PRS3SG

– pet'a-lan [**pareŋge** erəkt-aš] kül-eš.
 Peter-DAT potato peel-INF should. PRS3SG
'What should Peter do? Peter should peel the potatoes.'

(30) məlam ni-mo-m č'ij-aš. **jupk-əm-at/ *jupk-at, šovər-əm-at/**
 I-DAT NEG-what-ACC put.on-INF skirt-ACC-PTCL skirt-PTCL waistcoat-ACC-PTCL/

***šovər-at** urg-aš kül-eš.
 waistcoat-PTCL sew-INF have.to-PRS3SG

'I have got nothing to wear. I have got to make a skirt, and a waistcoat.'

(31) **šür-at** šolt-aš kül-eš.
 soup-PTCL cook-INF have.to-PRS3SG

'I have got to make soup [and sweep the floor etc.]'

The DO is unmarked if both the verb and the DO bear the same status in the information structure (wide-focused VP). The DO takes the accusative marker if the verb or the DO bear narrow focus, or if DO / V is topicalized, or is in the focus of contrast.

(a) the Direct Object bears narrow focus / is topicalized;	}	the DO and the V differ in their information structure interpretation
(b) the Verb bears narrow focus / is topicalized;		

(c) the DO+V is topicalized/focused/occurs in the focus of contrast, i.e. both the Verb and the Direct Object have the same information status.

Very often, unmarked DOs are observed if the VP describes an “institutionalized activity” unit (wash the hands, sweep the floor, collect berries etc.), cf. Mithun 1986. In those cases, even the nouns marked with the possessive can appear without the accusative. Hence, both from the point of view of information structure and lexical semantics, the verb and the unmarked DO form one and the same unit.

Discourse opaqueness: no examples have been found in texts of unmarked DO as an antecedent of an anaphoric pronoun. Possible paraphrases:

(32) pet'a-n ala-mogaj **poŋg-əm** pog-əm-əž-əm da vara
 Peter-GEN INDEF-what.kind.of mushroom-ACC collect-NZR-3SG-ACC and then

tud-əm lukt-ən kudalt-əm-əž-əm už-əm.
 he-ACC take.out-CONV throw.away-NZR-3SG-ACC see-NARR.1SG

I saw Peter collect a lot of mushrooms and then throw them away.

(33) pet'a-n **poŋgo** pog-əm-əž-əm už-əm no vara č'əla
 Peter-GEN mushroom collect-NZR-3SG-ACC see-NARR.1SG but then everything

lukt-ən kudalt-əš.
 take.out-CONV throw.away-NARR

I saw Peter collect a lot of mushrooms and then throw everything away.

3. Conclusions

The considered constructions yield to the following features of incorporation: no case marking, verb adjacency, ban on presupposition triggers, ban on indefinite pronouns as modifiers, ban on pronominal unmarked DOs.

However, the following features hinder the analysis of this construction in terms of incorporation: coordination of unmarked DOs, plural marking, quantifiers, modifiers of several types. Semantically

Semantically, the unmarked DO in Mari can be specific and even definite. Hence, it does not show common properties with pseudoincorporation in West Greenlandic (van Geenhoven 1998), Nieuuan (Massam 2011), or Sakha and Tamil (Baker 2012).

Basing on these arguments, I propose to analyze the unmarked DO in Mari in terms of pseudoincorporation. This solution is possible if the theoretical decision is taken to accept, syntactically, pseudoincorporation of the plural NPs, quantifier groups and conjoined NPs; semantically, specific and even definite NPs pseudoincorporation.

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