

(Un)marked subjects and person-number marking in non-finite clauses in Mari

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ABSTRACT

The present paper examines the distribution of referentially independent genitive and unmarked subjects and subject-oriented person-number inflections in non-finite clauses in Meadow Mari (Uralic), focusing on participles, event nominals, and temporal gerunds. Empirically, the study addresses existing gaps in the description of these phenomena, uncovering more general patterns as well as several microparameters. It also reveals a striking similarity between event nominals and temporal gerunds. Theoretically, the paper contributes to a better understanding of these constructions in the following ways. First, it proposes an analysis of temporal gerunds as event nominals embedded in postpositional phrases. Second, it outlines an approach to licensing overt subjects and inflections in participial clauses and event nominals. Third, building upon Dékány & Georgieva's (2020) work on Udmurt, it explores ways to unify the treatment of event nominals and participial modifiers in Mari, which share morphology; a covert N account is shown to be the most promising one.

KEYWORDS

participle, nominalization, non-finite, agreement, Uralic

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Outline

The present study discusses the distribution of overt subjects and subject-related inflections in non-finite embedded clauses in Meadow Mari (Uralic; henceforth, Mari). Previous research has

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documented that certain non-finite clauses in Mari allow overt referentially independent subjects and/or person-number marking on the non-finite form corresponding to the embedded subject (Kangasmaa-Minn 1966, 1970; Kokla 1986; Matsumura 1986, 1999; Andreeva 2008; Serdobolskaya 2008a, 2008b; Serdobolskaya et al. 2012; Georgieva 2016; Riese, Bradley & Yefremova 2022, i.a.; also most recently Kashkin et al. 2023 on the closely related Hill Mari). Overt subjects can be genitive or morphologically unmarked, sometimes described as nominative (I use the more neutral term *unmarked* throughout the paper).¹ Subject-oriented person-number marking, when allowed, has been described as optional and is often referred to as *subject agreement*. However, as I will demonstrate, its distribution differs from that of regular agreement in other contexts.

Aside from some general observations, comprehensive research on the two phenomena across various syntactic structures remains limited. The grammars provide only a handful of examples, and the more theory-oriented papers also leave gaps in the description. At the same time, the presence of overt subjects and subject agreement in non-finite environments challenges fundamental assumptions in modern syntactic theory regarding the “defectiveness” of non-finite domains (going back to Chomsky 1965). The Mari data deserve to be carefully documented and discussed to determine whether they can be accommodated within the existing theoretical framework.

From an empirical perspective, the goal of the paper is to thoroughly examine the distribution of referentially independent genitive and unmarked subjects and subject-oriented person-number inflections (INFLs) in non-finite contexts in Mari, specifically in participial clauses, event nominals,² and temporal gerunds. The following research questions are to be addressed:

- I. In what constructions are overt subjects and INFLs attested and is there a strong correlation between the two phenomena?
- II. Does the choice of the subject case marking correlate with any syntactic properties of the non-finite construction and/or properties of the subject itself?
- III. Does the presence/absence of an INFL correlate with any syntactic properties of the non-finite constructions and/or properties of the whole sentence?

From a theoretical perspective, I propose that although on the surface the availability of overt subjects and INFLs in non-finite contexts in Mari supports the idea that the non-finite Tense/Inflection head is not feature-deficient compared to the finite one, in reality INFLs do not pattern with the usual subject agreement (the one attested in finite clauses) and both INFLs and overt subjects are licensed from outside non-finite TPs. I hope that the present paper will help call attention to the Mari data, show why they are relevant to the general discussion of finiteness, and further stimulate theoretical research on Uralic languages.

¹I am leaving aside overt dative subjects attested in rationale infinitives. Their behavior does not match that of genitive and unmarked subjects that the paper focuses on, and they do not alternate. Datives deserve a separate detailed discussion, and I refer the reader to Burukina (2023b) for an overview of the relevant data.

²Throughout the paper, I use the neutral term *nominal* to refer to items that exhibit clausal behavior (i.e., describe events/situations and allow unmarked subjects and direct objects), but share the external distribution with regular nominal phrases. Following a reviewer’s advice, I decided not to use the term *nominalization*, as it is often associated with a specific analysis of mixed syntactic projections involving a nominalizing head (see, e.g., Moulton 2014).



1.2. The data and methodology

This paper aims to address gaps in existing descriptions of the Mari constructions under consideration, focusing on comparing the distribution of overt subjects and INFLs across various non-finite clauses. To my knowledge, such a comprehensive comparison has not been previously made. Several separate studies have examined participles in Meadow and Hill Mari, drawing on limited primary data from different dialects: Brykina & Aralova (2012), Volkova (2017), Shagal & Volkova (2018), and Pleshak (2022). The most detailed of the existing descriptions of event nominals rely on corpus data: Serdobolskaya (2008a, 2008b), Serdobolskaya et al. (2012). While these works provide valuable insights, they primarily focus on what is *possible*, often leaving open the question of whether certain alternatives are *ungrammatical*. At the same time, temporal gerunds have largely remained understudied.

The present study is based on primary elicited data and offers a comprehensive examination of the distribution of overt subjects and apparent subject agreement in several non-finite constructions for a consistent group of speakers. The focus on I-languages (Chomsky 1986) is justified and advantageous due to the high degree of inter-speaker microvariation in modern Mari. The adopted methodology allows us to identify several subtle and important differences between the individual grammars of the native speaker consultants. Such nuances will be overlooked in a larger-scale corpus study that combines data from multiple sources, obscuring individual patterns. While corpus approaches have their merits, the present study's goal – to uncover correlations between different patterns of subject marking, the (un)availability of INFLs, and various syntactic and semantic properties of sentences – is better served by an in-depth analysis of individual grammars.

Unless otherwise specified, the examples presented in this study were collected between 2022 and 2024 through elicitation sessions with two native speakers of the Morkinsko-Sernur variety of Meadow Mari. Consultant A grew up in the village Kugener (Sovetsky district) and moved to Yoshkar-Ola at the age of 18. Consultant B grew up in Yoshkar-Ola, but her family used a mix of Yoshkar-Ola and Morkinsky varieties of the language. Both consultants currently reside in Hungary. More information is presented below:

- Age range: 38–45 years
- First language: Mari
- Second language: Russian (acquisition began at age 3)
- Education: university degree in linguistics/philology
- Language use: regular use of Mari in daily communication with friends and family and as primary language when visiting Mari El republic

Each type of examples presented in this paper was verified multiple times with both consultants in various settings to ensure reliability and consistency. The consultants were presented with translation (from Russian to Mari), judgment, and explication by paraphrase tasks.

1.3. The scope of the study

The paper focuses on overt genitive and unmarked subjects in non-finite clauses, possibly accompanied by corresponding person-number markers on the non-finite form. To determine the range of contexts for examination, let us first consult the most recent grammar of Meadow



Mari by Riese, Bradley & Yefremova (2022). Table 1 summarizes the information in it, with two important remarks regarding its presentation. First, participles used as prenominal modifiers are listed separately from event nominals used as arguments. Riese, Bradley & Yefremova (2022) do not describe event nominals as a separate category but rather as participles used as verbal nouns – an approach also adopted by Alhoniemi (1993) and Savatkova (2002) for Hill Mari. Nevertheless, the grammar acknowledges distinct properties of verbal nouns compared to modifying participles, which justifies keeping them apart. Second, in the table, “No” indicates that the grammar explicitly states that using an overt subject or an INFL is not allowed, and “No?” indicates that the (un)grammaticality of a certain pattern is not mentioned and there are no relevant examples. Additionally, it should be noted that in all constructions, the embedded subject may remain unexpressed.

The paper proceeds as follows. Taking Riese, Bradley & Yefremova (2022) as the starting point and keeping in mind the research questions outlined in section 1.1, I examine the distribution of subjects and INFLs in the three types of constructions: participles, event nominals, and temporal gerunds. Section 2 discusses modifying participial clauses. Section 3 and section 4 examine the distribution of genitive/unmarked subjects and INFLs in event nominals. Section 5

Table 1. Non-finite clauses in Mari (Riese, Bradley & Yefremova 2022)

		Overt referentially independent subjects	INFL
Active participles (PTCPs) (Riese, Bradley & Yefremova 2022, 255)	-šE ³	NO	NO?
Non-active PTCPs (also called passive, <i>ibid.</i> , 256)	-mE	NO	NO?
Future-necessitive PTCPs (no active/non-active distinction, <i>ibid.</i> , 259)	-šaš	NO	NO?
Negative PTCPs (no active/non-active distinction, <i>ibid.</i> , 262)	-dəmE	NO	NO?
Event nominals (<i>ibid.</i> , 257)	-mE	unmarked (usually [-animate]) or GEN (usually [+animate])	optional, can be dropped if the subject is genitive; no examples with an unmarked subject and an INFL
Future event nominals (<i>ibid.</i> , 261)	-šaš		
Negative event nominals (<i>ibid.</i> , 262)	-dəmE		
Gerunds of prior action (<i>ibid.</i> , 268)	-mek(e)	unmarked or GEN; GEN usually if [+animate]; pronominal subjects are only GEN	
Gerunds of future action (<i>ibid.</i> , 270)	-meš(ke)		
Gerunds of simultaneous action (<i>ibid.</i> , 272)	-šəla	usually silent	optional

³The upper-case E in the suffixes means vowel-harmonic e~o~ö.



focuses on temporal gerunds. Section 6 outlines a theoretical analysis of the data within the generative framework. Section 7 concludes.

2. PARTICIPIAL MODIFIERS

This section discusses the distribution of subjects and INFLs in modifying participial clauses. Although [Riese, Bradley & Yefremova \(2022, 255–262\)](#) do not provide relevant examples, several recent papers on Meadow and Hill Mari have reported that participial clauses (primarily non-active *-mE* constructions) can contain an overt subject. This work is briefly summarized in section 2.1, while sections 2.2 and 2.3 demonstrate that the reported observations are mostly corroborated in the variety of Meadow Mari under discussion.

2.1. The reported patterns

Mari has four types of participles:

- (i) active participles ending with *-šE*:
pričastij-əm šəmlə-še jəlməze ‘participle-ACC study-PTCP.ACT linguist’⁴
- (ii) non-active (passive) participles with *-mE*:
pu dene čəŋə-mo pört ‘wood with make-PTCP.NACT house’
- (iii) future participles with *-šaš*:
šəndə-šaš peledəs-βlak ‘plant-PTCP.FUT flower-PL’
- (iv) negative participles with *-dəmE*:
poč-dəmo okna ‘open-PTCP.NEG window’

As reflected in [Table 1](#), [Riese, Bradley & Yefremova \(2022, 255–262\)](#) do not provide examples of participles used as modifiers with either a referentially independent subject or an INFL. Similarly, [Matsumura \(1986, 1999\)](#) observes that modifying participial clauses are subject- and INFL-less. The incompatibility of active *-šE*, *-šaš*, and *-dəmE* participles with an independent subject is unsurprising, as the participial clause necessarily contains a subject gap linked to the modified noun. However, that non-active *-mE*, *-šaš*, and *-dəmE* forms are equally incompatible with an embedded subject is less expected. Despite the name ‘passive participles’ used by [Riese, Bradley & Yefremova \(2022\)](#), going back to [Pengitov \(1951\)](#), these items do not bear passive morphology and, arguably, do not involve complete removal of the Agent. They typically contain a gap in the logical object position linked to the modified noun, which leaves the Agent/logical subject potentially available.

[Brykina & Aralova \(2012\)](#) and [Volkova \(2017\)](#) report that participial relative clauses in Meadow Mari allow embedded subjects. Focusing on non-active *-mE* participles, they observe the following. The choice between genitive and unmarked subjects depends on the DP’s position

⁴If not stated otherwise, the examples are from Meadow Mari. I use simplified UPA transcription: ɣ = ə̃ = ə, ɸ = ě = č. Morpheme boundaries are only indicated for those forms in the focus of the paper. The vowel alternation at the end of the stem is regular: when followed by a suffix, the stem-final e/o becomes ə.



in the animacy hierarchy. Personal pronouns as subjects must be marked genitive. [+human] subjects tend to be genitive. [–human] and [–animate] subjects can be either genitive or unmarked. In addition to this, both papers mention that no INFL can be added to the participle itself; however, a possessive suffix cross-referencing the embedded subject and morphologically identical to INFLs may appear on the relativized (modified) noun.⁵ It further follows from their data that the possessive suffix is optional.

Similarly, [Shagal & Volkova \(2018\)](#) and [Pleshak \(2022\)](#) report for Hill Mari (a sister-language of Meadow Mari) that non-active participial clauses allow genitive and unmarked overt subjects. Genitive subjects are optionally cross-referenced by a possessive marker on the relativized (modified) noun. Interestingly, while Shagal and Volkova note that modifying participles can bear no person-number inflection, Pleshak mentions that INFLs (in her terminology, subject agreement morphology) “can occur not only on head nouns, but also on participles” ([Pleshak 2022](#), 157). She illustrates this with the following example:

- (1) Tən’ ro-m-et püşängəm mä užənna.
 you cut-PTCP.NACT-2SG tree.ACC we see.PST.1PL
 ‘We saw the tree cut by you.’ [[Hill Mari](#); [Pleshak 2022](#), 157]

Two remarks should be made regarding this example. First, note that the embedded subject – a personal pronoun – is unmarked. This is already unusual, since personal pronouns in this function are normally genitive, both in Meadow Mari and in Hill Mari. Second, the 2SG inflection/possessive suffix is also used as a discourse marker ([Savatkova 2002](#), 115). Since Pleshak does not provide a context for this sentence, it is impossible to determine what exactly *-et* contributes to its interpretation. As stated in the next section, my consultants rejected examples with inflected participles in Meadow Mari, with and without an overt pronoun.

2.2. The observed patterns

The data from my native speaker consultants largely corroborate the observations made by [Brykina & Aralova \(2012\)](#) and [Volkova \(2017\)](#). First, all types of participles are **strictly incompatible with an INFL**, regardless of whether it cross-references the embedded logical subject or the modified noun. The examples in (2) and (3) are originally from [Riese, Bradley & Yefremova \(2022](#), 255) but the (un)grammaticality judgments are from my consultants.

(2) active participles

- a. [marij jəlməm tunem-š{e/ə-*št}] student-βlak
 Mari language.ACC learn-PTCP.ACT-3PL student-PL
 ‘students studying Mari’

⁵[Brykina & Aralova \(2012\)](#) examine a variety of Meadow Mari spoken in the village Staryj Torjal (Mari El, Russia). [Volkova \(2017\)](#) does not specify the source of the original data. [Shagal & Volkova \(2018\)](#) present elicited sentences from the Mikryakovo variety of Hill Mari. [Pleshak’s \(2022\)](#) Hill Mari data come from the villages of Kuznetsovo and Mikryakovo (Mari El, Russia).



- b. [pričastijəm šəmlə-š{e/ə-^{*}zje}] jəlməze
 participle.ACC study-PTCP.ACT-3SG linguist
 ‘linguist studying participles’
- c. tarvanə-šəš(-^{*}əšt) pojezd-βlak
 move-PTCP.FUT-3PL train-PL
 ‘trains that will/should move’

(3) *non-active participles*

- a. [pu dene čəŋə-m{o/-^{*}əšt}] pört-βlak
 wood with make-PTCP.NACT-3PL house-PL
 ‘houses made of wood’
 -əšt is not accepted with the reading ‘houses made of wood by them’ either
- b. šəndə-šəš(-^{*}əšt) peledəš-βlak
 plant-PTCP.FUT-3PL flower-PL
 ‘flowers to be/that should be planted’
 -əšt is not accepted with the reading ‘flowers to be planted by them’ either

When it comes to the distribution of overt embedded subjects, both consultants allowed their use in participial relative clauses. **Personal pronouns and [+human] DPs** used as subjects must be marked genitive. Consultant A occasionally allowed examples with an unmarked [+human] non-pronominal subject, but only as marginal. Consultant B rejected such sentences.

- (4) a. Məj šonem [təjən / ^{*}təj] üšanə-me joltašet]
 I think.NPST.1SG you.GEN you believe-PTCP.NACT friend.2SG
 memnam podvoditla.
 we.ACC let.down.NPST.3SG
 ‘I think that your friend whom you trust will let us down.’
- b. Vaša*(-n) muš-mo tuβər-βlakše uže koškenət.
 V.-GEN wash-PTCP.NACT shirt-PL.3SG already dry.PST.3PL
 (i) ‘Vasja’s washed shirts have already dried.’
 (ii) ‘The shirts washed by Vasja have already dried.’
- c. Jəβan buxgalter*/?(-ən) puə-mo pašadaržəm šotla.
 Jyvan accountant-GEN give-PTCP.NACT wages.3SG.ACC count.NPST.3SG
 ‘Jyvan is counting the wages that the bookkeeper gave (to him).’



According to Consultant A, **animate** [–human] subjects and **inanimate subjects** can be either genitive or unmarked. Consultant B occasionally preferred the unmarked option of [–human] animates (5) and consistently preferred unmarked inanimates (6).⁶

- (5) Məj pərəs(-%ən) purl-mo melnam kočkaš om tünjal.⁷
 I cat-GEN bite-PTCP.NACT pancake.ACC eat.INF NEG.1SG start
 ‘I will not eat the/a pancake nibbled by the/a cat.’
 Consultant A: both *pərəs* and *pərəsən* are allowed.
 Consultant B: only *pərəs* is allowed.
- (6) a. Mardež(-%ən) poč-mo omsa jük deč məj lüdəm.
 wind-GEN open-PTCP.NACT door sound from I be.afraid.PST.1SG
 ‘I got scared of the sound of the/a door opened by the wind.’
 Consultant A: both *mardež* and *mardežən* are allowed.
 Consultant B: only *mardež* is allowed.
- b. pojezd(-%ən) tol-mo βokzal
 train-GEN come-PTCP.NACT station
 ‘the/a station to which the/a train comes’
 Consultant A: both *pojezd* and *pojezdən* are allowed.
 Consultant B: only *pojezd* is allowed.

When the embedded subject is genitive, the modified head noun can bear the corresponding possessive marker, morphologically identical to INFLs. According to Consultant A, such marking is optional and its presence together with an overt embedded subject gives rise to a more emphatic interpretation. Consultant B strongly preferred examples with a possessive suffix.

⁶Note also that Consultant B completely rejected some examples with an inanimate unmarked/genitive subject deemed grammatical by *Brykina & Aralova (2012)* and judged as acceptable by Consultant A:

- (i) a. %Təjən nosket(ən) kijə-me jaššikəm muən om kert.
 you.GEN sock.2SG.GEN lie-PTCP.NACT box.ACC find.GER NEG.1SG be.able
 ‘I cannot find the box where your socks lie.’
 Consultant A: both *nosket* and *nosketən* are allowed.
 Consultant B: neither *nosket* nor *nosketən* is allowed.
- b. %Gradusnik(ən) ončəktə-mo temperaturlan om üšane.
 thermometer.GEN show-PTCP.NACT temperature.DAT NEG.1SG believe
 ‘I don’t trust the temperature shown by the thermometer.’
 Consultant A: both *gradusnik* and *gradusnikən* are allowed.
 Consultant B: neither *gradusnik* nor *gradusnikən* is allowed.

⁷Throughout the paper variation in judgments among the consultants is marked with %.
 ? marks marginally accepted but not ungrammatical examples.



- (7) Vaša*(-n) muš-mo tuβər-βlak%(-še) uže koškenət.
 V.-GEN wash-PTCP.NACT shirt-PL-3SG already dry.PST.3PL
 ‘Vasja’s washed shirts have already dried.’
 Consultant A: -še is optional. Consultant B: without -še marginal.

The data are summarized in Table 2.

2.3. Analyzing genitive subjects as possessors

Leaving unmarked subjects aside for a minute, section 2.2 showed that using a participle together with a genitive DP⁸ is allowed. In principle, such genitive DPs could be analyzed as either an embedded subject of the participial clause or as a possessor of the relativized (modified) noun. This potential ambiguity is acknowledged already in Brykina & Aralova (2012, 488); however, to the best of my knowledge, the only attempt to distinguish between the two analytical options by applying syntactic diagnostics has been made by Pleshak (2022) for Hill Mari. She reported variation among her native speaker consultants: in group 1 genitive DPs co-occurring with participles patterned with clause-external possessors, while in group 2 they showed properties of clause-internal embedded subjects. In what follows I discuss the results of Pleshak’s tests when applied to the Meadow Mari data under consideration. As we will see, Meadow Mari shows similar microvariation.

To begin with, it should be noted that the genitive DP does not have to be interpreted as an Agent of the underlying event and can denote an actual possessor (owner) of the object referred to by the head noun. This is shown in (8), which has a felicitous reading ‘Masha’s shirts washed by someone.’

- (8) **Mašan** muš-mo tuβər-βlak-še
 M.GEN wash-PTCP.NACT shirt-PL-3SG
 (i) ‘Masha’s washed shirts’ (ii) ‘shirts that were washed by Masha’

However, at least in some contexts, the genitive DP must be analyzed as an argument of the participial predicate. First, Mari nominal phrases can generally have only one genitive dependent; as shown in (9), the speakers rejected examples with multiple possessors.

Table 2. The distribution of INFLs, POSS and subjects in modifying participial clauses

	INFLs	POSS	Personal pronouns	[+human]	[+animate, –human]	[–animate]
A	NO	optional, with GEN	only GEN	preferred GEN	GEN/unmarked	
B	NO	strongly preferred, with GEN	only GEN	only GEN	GEN/unmarked	unmarked

⁸At this point, I assume that nominal phrases in Mari are DPs (see Pleshak 2019 on Hill Mari). See section 6 discussing a possibility of some nominal phrases in the language being smaller n/NPs.



- (9) a. Lev Tolstojən roman-že/*em
 Leo Tolstoy.GEN novel-3SG/1SG
 Only: 'a novel by Leo Tolstoy'
 Not available: 'my (copy of a) novel by Leo Tolstoy'
- b. *Jəβanən Lev Tolstojən roman-že
 Jyvan.GEN Leo Tolstoy.GEN novel-3SG
 Intended: 'Jyvan's (copy of a) novel by Leo Tolstoy'

At the same time, in sentences with participial modifiers, Consultant A allowed for the modified noun to be marked with a possessor suffix that indexes an unpronounced possessor even in the presence of a non-coreferential genitive DP. The latter is unambiguously interpreted as the subject of the participial clause. Consultant B rejected all attempts to indicate an independent possessor in the presence of a participial clause with a genitive DP.

- (10) a. %Mašan muškən šəndə-me tuβər-em
 Masha.GEN wash.GER put-PTCP.NACT shirt-1SG
 'my shirts that were washed by Masha'
 Consultant A: acceptable. Consultant B: not acceptable.
- b. %Məj šonem təjən üšanə-me joltaš-em
 I think.NPST.1SG you.GEN believe-PTCP.NACT friend-1SG
 memnam podvoditla.
 we.ACC let.down.NPST.3SG
 'I think that my friend whom you trust will let us down.'
 Consultant A: acceptable. Consultant B: not acceptable.

Second, Consultant A allowed the genitive subject DP to be an NPI if the participle itself was in the negative form and in the absence of a matrix negation. This is illustrated in (11). Consultant B was again more restrictive and evaluated such examples as marginal at best but mostly unacceptable.

- (11) a. %Nigön jöratə-dəme pərəsigəm čamanəšəm.
 nobody.GEN love-PTCP.NEG kitten.ACC pity.PST.1SG
 'I pitied the kitten that nobody loved.'
 Consultant A: acceptable. Consultant B: marginal.
- b. %Nigön jü-dəmö kružka üstembalne šinča.
 nobody.GEN drink-PTCP.NEG mug on.the.table sit.NPST.3SG
 'A mug (of tea) that no one drank is standing on the table'.
 Consultant A: acceptable. Consultant B: marginal.

The inter-speaker variation is further noticeable when we examine the relative position of a genitive DP interpreted as the embedded subject and other dependents in the participial clause. Consultant A allowed a flexible word order, with the genitive DP being either followed or preceded by the clause-internal material. Consultant B only accepted and produced sentences where the genitive DP was at the left edge of the participial clause.



- (12) a. Jəβan **buxgalterən** **teŋgeçe** puə-mo pašadaržəm
 Jyvan accountant.GEN yesterday give-PCTP.PAS wages.3SG.ACC
 šotla.
 count.NPST.3SG
 ‘Jyvan is counting the wages that the bookkeeper gave (to him) yesterday.’
- b. %Jəβan **teŋgeçe** **buxgalterən** puə-mo pašadaržəm
 Jyvan yesterday accountant.GEN give-PCTP.PAS wages.3SG.ACC
 šotla.
 count.NPST.3SG
 ‘Jyvan is counting the wages that the bookkeeper gave (to him) yesterday.’
 Consultant A: acceptable. Consultant B: not acceptable.

2.4. Interim summary

Modifying non-active participles in Meadow Mari allow embedded subjects and prohibit INFLs. The distribution and morphological marking of embedded subjects reveal significant inter-speaker variation.

Both genitive and unmarked subjects are attested in these constructions, but their behavior is not uniform. The unmarked option is predominantly reserved for non-human animate and inanimate subjects, while the genitive option is obligatory for personal pronouns and [+human] DPs. Microvariation is evident in the licensing conditions for genitive subjects. Consultant A allows genitive subjects independently of the nominal context outside the participial clause. In Consultant B’s grammar genitive subjects are essentially treated as possessors of the modified head noun, with stricter constraints on their distribution.

3. OVERT SUBJECTS AND INFLS IN EVENT NOMINALS

By event nominals I understand constructions marked with the suffixes *-mE*, *-dəmE*, *-šaš* that exhibit mixed verbal-nominal behavior. On the one hand, similarly to participles and finite clauses, they denote events/situations, have an internal argument structure, license direct accusative-marked objects, as in (13), and can contain modifiers typically associated with verbal predicates (e.g., locative adjuncts). On the other hand, they have the external syntactic distribution of DPs: they are used as arguments and bear the corresponding case marker, e.g., ACC (13a); they can also be used as dependents of adpositions (13b). I am using the neutral term *nominal* to refer to such items, instead of such terms as *headless relative clause* or *nominalization*, associated with specific syntactic analyses; the corresponding suffixes are glossed as NM. I will return to the question about the internal structure of event nominals in section 6.

- (13) a. Məj [Jəβanən kuze maskam pušt-mə-žə-m] užənam.
 I J.GEN how bear.ACC kill-NM-3SG-ACC see.PST.1SG
 ‘I saw how Jyvan killed a/the bear.’ [Serdobolskaya 2008a, (1)]



- b. [Eŋerəm kəlməktə-me] **deč** βara me koŋki dene koštəŋna.
 river.ACC freeze-NM from then we skates with go.PST.1PL
 ‘After the river got frozen we skated.’ [ibid.]

Mari has three types of event nominals:

- (i) affirmative (positive) event nominals that end with *-mE*,
- (ii) negative event nominals that end with *-dəmE*, which are used to indicate that the event did not happen or was not completed,
- (iii) future/irrealis event nominals that end with *-šāš*.

According to Riese, Bradley & Yefremova (2022, 256–262), the three types of nominals show uniform behavior when it comes to the distribution of overt subjects and INFLs; recall the information in Table 1. Event nominals can appear with an overt subject. Inanimate subjects are typically unmarked and animate DPs are marked genitive. The embedded subject can also remain silent (i.e., unpronounced). A nominal form can bear an INFL matching the person and number features of its overt or understood subject. All examples given in the grammar illustrate this only for genitive and silent subjects, and there is no example with an unmarked subject and an INFL, though the authors do not state explicitly whether that is possible.

In what follows I present and discuss data received from my native speaker consultants, focusing first on the distribution of unmarked subjects (subsection 3.1) and then genitive subjects and INFLs (subsections 3.2). Both speakers consistently allowed overt subjects and INFLs in the three types of event nominals.

3.1. Restricting the distribution of unmarked subjects

As in participial clauses, morphologically unmarked subjects and genitive subjects are allowed in the same types of nominalized clauses; however, the distribution of the former is more restricted than that of the latter. I will discuss the NOM/GEN alternation in nominals in detail in section 4. At this point, it is important to mention the following two properties that distinguish unmarked and genitive overt subjects. These are strict rules with no exceptions, and they hold regardless of the grammatical function of the nominal (i.e., a subject, a direct object, an indirect object, or a dependent within a PP).

First, as with participles (section 2.2), **personal pronouns** used as embedded subjects can never remain morphologically unmarked and must always bear a genitive suffix. This is illustrated below for affirmative nominals (14a), negative nominals (14b), and future nominals (14c), with 1st and 2nd person singular and plural pronouns.⁹

⁹Similarly to the first- and second-person personal pronouns, the third-person personal pronouns as subjects must be marked genitive, in participial clauses as well as in event nominals and in temporal gerunds.



- (14) a. *affirmative nominals*
 [Məjən / *Məj βazəm šalatə-mə-m] mondenat.
 I.GEN I vase.ACC break.TV-NM-ACC forget.PST.2SG
 ‘You forgot that I broke a/the vase.’
- b. *negative nominals*
 [Təjən / *Təj ijən moštə-dəmo] məjəm örəktaren.
 you.SG.GEN you.SG swim.GER be.able-NM.NEG I.ACC surprise.PST.3SG
 ‘It surprised me that you (sg) can’t swim.’
- c. *future/irrealis nominals*
 [Memnan / *Me möngö pörtəl-šaš-əm] nígö
 we.GEN we home return-NM.FUT-ACC nobody
 pälən ogəl.
 know.GER be.NEG.3SG
 ‘Nobody knew that we were returning home.’

Second, in all three types of event nominals **unmarked subjects** are strictly incompatible with an INFL, as shown in (15).

- (15) *unmarked subjects without an INFL*
- a. [Mardež dene βaze šalanə-mə(-*žə)-m] sajən šarnem.
 wind with vase break.ITV -NM-3SG-ACC well remember.NPST.1SG
 ‘I remember well that a/the vase was broken by the wind.’
- b. ?[Vaslij ijən moštə-dəm(o/ə-*žə)] məjəm örəktaren.
 V. swim.GER be.able-NM.NEG-3SG I.ACC surprise.PST.3SG
 ‘It surprised me that Vaslij can’t swim.’
- c. Joča-βlak [cirk tol-šaš(-*əž)-əm] βučənət.
 child-PL circus come-NM.FUT-3SG-ACC wait.PST.3PL
 ‘The children were waiting for a/the circus to arrive.’

In other words, an INFL can only appear with either an overt genitive-marked subject, as in (16) parallel to (15), or a silent subject (*pro*), whose case marking is impossible to identify.

- (16) *genitive subjects with an INFL*
- a. [Mardež dene βazən šalanə-mə-žə-m] sajən
 wind with vase.GEN break.ITV-NM-3SG-ACC well
 šarnem.
 remember.NPST.1SG
 ‘I remember well that the vase was broken by the wind.’



- b. [Vaslijən ijən moštə-dəmə-žo] məjəm örəktaren.
 V.GEN swim.GER be.able-NM.NEG-3SG I.ACC surprise.PST.3SG
 ‘It surprised me that Vaslij can’t swim.’
- c. Joča-βlak [cirkən tol-šaš-əžə-m] βučənət.
 child-PL circus.GEN come-NM.FUT-3SG-ACC expect.PST.3PL
 ‘The children were waiting for a/the circus to arrive.’

The data in Matsumura (1986, 1999) also suggest that unmarked subjects cannot co-occur with an INFL. Serdobolskaya et al. (2012) report that 86% of the nominals with an unmarked subject in their corpus of the Staryj Torjal variety of Meadow Mari (app. 1200 sentences with an event nominal) were not cross-referenced by an INFL marker.¹⁰ In the Morkinsko-Sernur variety of Meadow Mari discussed in the present paper all examples with an unmarked subject and an INFL were deemed unacceptable by the consultants.

3.2. The optionality of GEN and INFLs

Another general rule concerns the mutual distribution of genitive subjects and INFLs. As mentioned above, genitive subjects (but not unmarked subjects) are compatible with an INFL. Importantly, neither of these elements is obligatorily present. In other words, a subject can remain silent (e.g., a *pro*) when an INFL is present and an INFL on the nominal can be omitted when there is an overt genitive subject.

When the embedded subject is intended to be a personal pronoun, it is preferably left silent and only a matching INFL on the event nominal is used (to license the silence and/or facilitate the interpretation). The speakers also allow for the subject to be an overt pronoun marked genitive in the absence of an INFL. Although such examples receive lower acceptability scores compared to their INFL-only counterparts and are not produced in the translation tasks, they are not rejected; hence, the question mark in (17b). The two versions of a sentence – with a sole INFL or with a sole GEN – receive the same interpretation.

- (17) a. Aspirant-βlak [[*pro* Sibirəške košt-mə-na] nergen] kalaskalenət.
 postgrad-PL Siberia.ILL go-NM-1PL about talk.PST.3PL
 ‘The postgraduate students talked about our trip to Siberia.’ (= b)
- b. ?Aspirant-βlak [[*memnan* Sibirəške košt-mo] nergen] kalaskalenət.
 postgrad-PL we.GEN Siberia.ILL go-NM about talk.PST.3PL
 ‘The postgraduate students talked about our trip to Siberia.’ (= a)

¹⁰Although this is not explicitly discussed by Serdobolskaya et al. (2012), it is likely that most if not all of the remaining 14% of the sentences with an unmarked subject and an INFL involve possessive markers in their discourse functions.



When the embedded subject is a non-pronominal DP marked genitive, an INFL can also be absent.¹¹ Such sentences with an overt subject and without a person-number marker on the nominal are interpreted as neutral with respect to the information structure. This is illustrated in (18) for an animate and inanimate embedded subject.

- (18) a. Aspirant-βlak [[j**oča-βlakən** Sibiřǎške košt-mo] nergen] kalaskalenət.
 postgrad-PL child-PL.GEN Siberia.ILL go-NM about talk.PST.3PL
 ‘The postgraduate students talked about the children’s trip to Siberia.’
- b. [Mardež dene **βazən** šalanə-mə-m] saǰən šarnem.
 wind with vase.GEN break.ITV-NM-ACC well remember.NPST.ISG
 ‘I remember well that the vase was broken by the wind.’

It is also possible for a genitive subject (either a personal pronoun or a referential DP) to co-occur with an INFL. When asked whether such examples (19) differ from those with the genitive subject alone (18) and, in case of a pronominal subject, with an INFL alone (17), both consultants suggested that the doubly-marked sentences were perceived as more emphatic, with the embedded subject being contrasted to the possible alternatives (see also section 2.2 on a similar interpretational pattern in participial clauses). Notably, an overt pronominal subject on its own is not necessarily interpreted as emphatic (17b). Future work is yet to determine the exact range of possible information structure readings for such examples (for instance, whether they always involve a contrast).

- (19) a. Aspirant-βlak [[**memnan** Sibiřǎške košt-mə-na] nergen] kalaskalenət.
 postgrad-PL we.GEN Siberia.ILL go-NM-1PL about talk.PST.3PL
 ‘The postgraduate students talked about OUR trip to Siberia.’ (and not about someone else’s trip)
- b. Aspirant-βlak [[j**oča-βlakən** Sibiřǎške košt-mə-št] nergen] kalaskalenət.
 postgrad-PL child-PL-GEN Siberia.ILL go-NM-3PL about talk.PST.3PL
 ‘The postgraduate students talked about THE CHILDREN’S trip to Siberia.’

¹¹Consultant B accepted examples with an overt embedded subject and no INFL regardless of the grammatical function of the event nominal. Consultant A evaluated all sentences with an overt embedded subject and no INFL as acceptable except for those where the nominalized expression was itself the subject of predication. This is illustrated in (i); the judgments are from Consultant A. At this point, I do not know to what attribute the difference in judgments. The answer may lie in the information-structure related properties of the constructions, and I leave the issue to be examined by future research.

- (i) a. [Slon-βlakən tūnašte lij-mə-št / *lij-me] peš küleşan.
 elephant-PL.GEN world.INE be-NM-3PL be-NM very necessary
 ‘It is very important that elephants exist in the world.’
- b. [Slon-βlakən tūnašte lij-mə-št-əm / lij-m-əm] saǰən šarnem.
 elephant-PL.GEN world.INE be-NM-3PL-ACC be-NM-ACC well remember.NPST.ISG
 ‘I remember well that elephants exist in the world.’



- c. [Mardež dene βazən šalanə-mə-žə-m]
 wind with vase.GEN break.ITV-NM-3SG-ACC
 sajən šarnem.
 well remember.NPST.1SG
 ‘I remember well that THE VASE was broken by the wind.’

From a morphosyntactic perspective, it is important to highlight the difference between INFLs in non-finite constructions and the subject agreement marking in finite clauses. The former are optional. The latter is always obligatory regardless of whether the subject is overt or silent, contrasted or not. This will be relevant when I sketch out a possible theoretical account of the phenomena under discussion (section 6).

4. THE GENITIVE/UNMARKED ALTERNATION

4.1. The observed patterns

This section summarizes the main empirical generalizations behind the alternation between genitive and unmarked subjects in event nominals. Due to space limitation, I will only provide examples with affirmative *-mE* nominals. There are some slight differences between the grammars of the two native speaker consultants, which resemble the differences observed in participial clauses (section 2).

Consultant A produced sentences with genitive subjects, regardless of the type of DP (animate or inanimate). Likewise, they preferred genitive subjects over unmarked subjects when asked to evaluate and compare examples in Mari. They also readily accepted examples with unmarked **inanimate** subjects. Finally, they sometimes allowed examples with unmarked **non-human** animate subjects but mentioned that such sentences sounded “more artificial”. They did not themselves produce sentences with unmarked [+**human**] subjects and evaluated the corresponding constructed examples as marginal (but not absolutely unacceptable).

At the same time, Consultant B preferred **animate** subjects to be marked genitive and **inanimate** subjects to remain unmarked, matching the pattern reported by [Riese, Bradley & Yefremova \(2022\)](#). They allowed inanimate genitive subjects and occasionally (less frequently) allowed non-human animate unmarked subjects. As a rule, they did not allow unmarked [+human] subjects.

The data to illustrate these observations are given in (20)–(22). (20) shows the general preference for genitive [+human] subjects and the marginal (A)/unacceptable (B) status of unmarked [+human] subjects.

- (20) a. [Joča-βlakən βazəm šalatə-mə(-št-ə)m] sajən šarnem.
 child-PL.GEN vase.ACC break.TV-NM-3PL-ACC well remember.NPST.1SG
 ‘I remember well that (the) children broke a/the vase.’



- b. ?/*[**Joča-βlak** βazəm šalatə-mə-m] sajən šarnem.
 child-PL vase.ACC break.TV-NM-ACC well remember.NPST.1SG
 Consultant A: acceptable but worse than with GEN.
 Consultant B: not acceptable.

The sentences in (21) demonstrate that unmarked non-human animate subjects were (marginally) accepted by the native speakers, who preferred and produced the genitive options.

- (21) a. [**Slon-βlakən** tūnašte lij-mə(-št-ə)m / ul-mə(-št-ə)m]
 elephant-PL.GEN world.INE be-NM-3PL-ACC be-NM-3PL-ACC
 sajən šarnem.
 well remember.NPST.1SG¹²
- b. ?[**Slon-βlak** tūnašte lij-mə-m / ul-mə-m] sajən šarnem.
 elephant-PL world.INE be-NM-ACC be-NM-ACC well remember.NPST.1SG
 'I remember well that elephants exist in the world.'
 Consultant A: acceptable but worse than with GEN. Consultant B: acceptable.

Finally, examples in (22) illustrate the variation among the speakers when it comes to inanimate subjects: both allowed unmarked subjects, and Consultant A frequently allowed and produced sentences with a genitive subject.

- (22) a. [**Jer-βlak** tūnašte lij-mə-m / ul-mə-m] sajən šarnem.
 lake-PL world.INE be-NM-ACC be-NM-ACC well remember.NPST.1SG
 'I remember well that lakes exist in the world.'
- b. %[**Jer-βlakən** tūnašte lij-mə(-št-ə)m / ul-mə(-št-ə)m]
 lake-PL.GEN world.INE be-NM-3PL-ACC be-NM-3PL-ACC
 sajən šarnem.
 well remember.NPST.1SG
 Consultant A: acceptable. Consultant B: not acceptable.
- c. [Mardež dene **βaze** šalanə-mə-m] sajən šarnem.
 wind with vase break.ITV-NM-ACC well remember.NPST.1SG
 'I remember well that a vase was broken by the wind.'
- d. [Mardež dene **βazən** šalanə-mə(-žə)-m] sajən
 wind with vase.GEN break.ITV-NM-3SG-ACC well
 šarnem.
 remember.NPST.1SG
 Both consultants: acceptable. Consultant A: preferred.

¹²In such examples Consultant A generally preferred the nominal *lijme*, derived from the verb *lijās* 'be', while Consultant B generally preferred the nominal *ulmo*, derived from the verb *ulās* 'be'.



The animate/inanimate contrast in event nominals was also noted, for instance, by *Serdobolskaya (2008a)*. She examined corpus data from the Saryj Torjal variety of Meadow Mari (app. 1200 sentences) and reported a general tendency (but not a strict rule) to use genitive animate subjects, especially [+human] ones, and unmarked inanimate subjects. It should be noted that *Serdobolskaya* grouped together proper names and personal pronouns, while my data indicate that their behavior is not identical, with the former occasionally staying unmarked but the latter being strictly genitive (section 3.1). She also showed no absolute numbers but only provided the percentages (Table 3).

Interestingly, when asked to compare parallel equally acceptable examples with an unmarked subject and a genitive subject, both consultants independently suggested that there was a correlation between the presence/absence of a genitive suffix and the referential status of the subject DP. All else being equal, unmarked DPs tend to be interpreted as non-specific and genitive DPs tend to be interpreted as specific. This is demonstrated by the contrast in the translations in (23) and (24).

- (23) a. [Mardež dene **βaze** šalanə-mə-m] sajən šarnem.
 wind with vase break.ITV-NM-ACC well remember.NPST.1SG
 'I remember well that **a** vase was broken by the wind.'
 Comment: about some vase, we don't know which one
- c. [Mardež dene **βazən** šalanə-mə(-žə)-m] sajən
 wind with vase.GEN break.ITV-NM-3SG-ACC well
 šarnem.
 remember.NPST.1SG
 'I remember well that **the** vase was broken by the wind.' (about a specific vase)
- (24) a. %[Joča-βlak βazəm šalatə-mə-m] sajən šarnem.
 child-PL vase.ACC break.TV-NM-ACC well remember.NPST.1SG
 'I remember well that children broke a/the vase.'
 Consultant A: a general fact about some children. Consultant B: rejected the example.
- b. [Joča-βlakən βazəm šalatə-mə(-št-ə)m] sajən šarnem.
 child-PL.GEN vase.ACC break.TV-NM-3PL-ACC well remember.NPST.1SG
 'I remember well that the children broke a/the vase.'

One might argue that, on their own, the speakers' intuitions are rather unreliable, and I agree that further research should be done on the referential status of DPs in Mari in general. Yet, the

Table 3. The corpus statistics from *Serdobolskaya (2008a)*

Case marking of S	Personal pronouns, proper names	[+human] common nouns	[+animate, -human]	[-animate]
genitive	95%	93%	77%	43%
unmarked	5%	7%	23%	57%



same unmarked/non-specific vs. genitive/specific tendency was previously mentioned by Serdobolskaya (2008a) and Serdobolskaya et al. (2012). Serdobolskaya (2008a) illustrated it with the pair of examples in (25).

- (25) a. [Rβezən türβöč-mə-žə-m] kol'əm.¹³
 boy.GEN sneeze-NM-3SG-ACC hear.PST.1SG
 'I heard that **the** boy sneezed.' [Serdobolskaya 2008a, (24)]
- b. [Rβeze türβöč-mə-m] kol'əm.
 boy sneeze-NM-ACC hear.PST.1SG
 'I heard that **one of** the children (unknown) sneezed.' [ibid.]

It is important to acknowledge that the pair in (25) is not minimal – in addition to the genitive suffix on the embedded subject, (25a) also contains an INFL on the event nominal. As was mentioned in section 3.2, the presence of an INFL together with an overt subject prompts the latter to be interpreted as contrastive, emphatic, and may make the specific reading more salient. However, together with the minimal pairs in (23) and (24), elicited from my native speaker consultants, these data lend credence to the general correlation pattern.

The correlation between the marking of a DP and its specificity has been observed in other constructions as well. For instance, both Meadow Mari and Hill Mari allow differential object marking (the term goes back to Bossong 1985) in non-finite contexts (Tužarov 1986; Alhoniemi 1993; Serdobolskaya 2005; Riese, Bradley & Yefremova 2022; Pleshak & Sirotina 2023, i.a.). Unmarked objects are usually indefinite unmodified nominal phrases, which parallels the tendencies characteristic of unmarked subjects in event nominals. (See section 6 for possible analyses of unmarked dependents.)

The correlation may also help account for the fact that, for both consultants, an unmarked inanimate subject often becomes dispreferred when it is modified by an adjective:¹⁴ the presence of a modifier makes a specific reading more salient. This is illustrated in (26) and (27). There is no obvious correlation with other properties of the embedded subject, for instance, its thematic role: an inanimate Cause argument (26) behaves the same way as an inanimate Patient (27).

- (26) a. [βijan mardež^{??}(-ən) βazəm šalatə-mə-m] mondenat.
 strong wind-GEN vase.ACC break.TV-NM-ACC forget.PST.2SG
 'You forgot that (the) strong wind broke a/the vase.'
- b. [Mardež(-%ən) βazəm šalatə-mə-m] mondenat.
 wind-GEN vase.ACC break.TV-NM-ACC forget.PST.2SG
 'You forgot that (the) wind broke a/the vase.'

¹³Türβəč in literary Meadow Mari.

¹⁴Note that the event nominal itself can be modified regardless of the marking of the subject:

- (i) (čot) rβez{e/ə-n} (čot) türβəč-mə-m kol'əm.
 strongly boy-GEN strongly sneeze-NM-ACC hear.PST1SG
 'I heard that a/the boy sneezed loudly.'



- (27) a. [Kugu üstel-βlak[?](-ən) tüñašte ul-mə-m] mondenat.
 big table-PL-GEN world.INE be-NM-ACC forget.PST.2SG
 ‘You forgot that (the) large tables exist.’
- b. [Üstel-βlak(-[?]ən) tüñašte ul-mə-m] mondenat.
 table-PL-GEN world.INE be-NM-ACC forget.PST.2SG
 ‘You forgot that (the) tables exist.’

Importantly, there is no ban on co-occurrence of unmarked inanimate subjects with adjectival modifiers: for example, both speakers agreed that ‘big box’ in (28) can be either genitive or caseless.

- (28) [(Kugu) korobka(-n) kroβat’ gəč kamβoč-mə-m] mondenat.
 big box-GEN bed from fall-NM-ACC forget.PST.2SG
 ‘You forgot that a/the (big) box fell from the bed.’

In general, unmarked subjects do not have to be bare nominal heads; for instance, they are not restricted in terms of plurality, as shown in (29).

- (29) [Küβar ümbalne korobka-βlak(-ən) kijə-mə-m] mondenat.
 floor above box-PL-GEN lie-NM-ACC forget.PST.2SG
 ‘You forgot that (the) boxes are lying on the floor.’

The next section discusses the tendencies behind the genitive/unmarked alternation that have been mentioned in the existing literature but that do not find sufficient support in data from the variety of Mari under consideration.

4.2. The disputable patterns

4.2.1. Transitivity and thematic roles. One of the first works on the topic, [Kangasmaa-Minn \(1966, 1970\)](#) suggests that the transitivity of the nominalized predicate plays a role in the case marking of the embedded subject in that in the presence of a direct object the subject is marked genitive. However, this assumption has been challenged by [Serdobolskaya \(2008a\)](#), among others, who demonstrates that nominals derived from transitive verbs allow both genitive and unmarked subjects. This is shown in (30); the acceptability of both types of subjects was confirmed by my consultants.

- (30) [Mlandəm lum(-ən) petər-me] okna gəč koješ.
 land.ACC snow-GEN cover-NM window from be.visible.NPST.3SG
 ‘It can be seen from the window that snow covers the ground.’ [[Serdobolskaya 2008a](#), (14)]

[Serdobolskaya \(2008a\)](#) and [Serdobolskaya et al. \(2012\)](#) argue that a more accurate distinction can be made in terms of thematic roles. In particular, agentive subjects tend to be genitive while patient-like subjects tend to be unmarked. Thus, 87.64% of the Agent subjects in the nominalized clauses found in [Serdobolskaya’s \(2008a\)](#) Mari corpus are genitive, and 68.35% of the Patient subjects are unmarked. Notably, the genitive/Agent vs. unmarked/Patient is not a strict



dichotomy in Mari. There are other factors at play, as there is a clear correlation between the thematic role of the subject, its agentivity, and its animacy and the referential status.

4.2.2. Linear adjacency. The literature also pays attention to properties of nominalized clauses. Thus, [Serdobolskaya \(2008b\)](#) notes that when the embedded subject is unmarked the word order is more rigid, and a modifier cannot intervene between the subject and the event nominal (31).

- (31) [{Ureməšte lum / *lum ureməšte} lum-mə-m] užam.
 outside snow snow outside snow-NM-ACC see.NPST.1SG
 ‘I see that it is snowing outside.’ [[Serdobolskaya 2008b](#), (43)]

This restriction does not hold in the variety of Meadow Mari spoken by my consultants, as unmarked subjects do not have to be adjacent to the nominalized predicate. For instance, all examples in (32) are grammatical. While (32a/b) were preferred over (32c/d), both speakers accepted all these options as perfectly normal.

- (32) a. [Küβar ümbalne **korobkan** kijə-mə(-žə)-m] mondenat.
 floor on box.GEN lie-NM-3SG-ACC forget.PST.2SG
 ‘You forgot that a/the box is lying on the floor.’
 b. [**Korobkan** küβar ümbalne kijə-mə(-žə)-m] mondenat.
 box.GEN floor on lie-NM-3SG-ACC forget.PST.2SG
 c. [Küβar ümbalne **korobka** kijə-mə-m] mondenat.
 floor on box lie-NM-ACC forget.PST.2SG
 d. [**Korobka** küβar ümbalne kijə-mə-m] mondenat.
 box floor on lie-NM-ACC forget.PST.2SG

4.2.3. ‘Stronger’ subjects. Genitive subjects have been argued to behave more like true syntactic subjects than their unmarked counterparts. Reportedly, only genitive but not unmarked subjects can be modified by a floating secondary predicate: [Serdobolskaya \(2008b\)](#) provides examples in (33) in support of this claim. However, there are several possible reasons why (33b) is degraded, starting with the animacy of the subject.

- (33) a. [Imñən šketən tol-mə-žə-m] užənam.
 horse.GEN alone come-NM-3SG-ACC see.PST.1SG
 ‘I saw that the horse came home alone.’ [[Serdobolskaya 2008b](#), (63)]
 b. *[Imñe šketən tol-mə-m] užənam.
 horse alone come-NM-ACC see.PST.1SG

In addition to this, according to [Serdobolskaya \(2008b\)](#), unmarked subjects in nominals cannot bind a reflexive pronoun (34) and control the silent subject inside an embedded gerund (35).



- (34) a. [ške βerəštəže tuβərən kečə-mə-žə-m] məjə užənam.
 SELF place.INE.3SG dress.GEN hang-NM-3SG-ACC I see.PST.1SG
 'I saw that the dress hung in its place.' [Serdobolskaya 2008b, (55)]
- b. *[ške βerəštəže tuβər kečə-mə-m] məjə užənam.
 SELF place.INE.3SG dress hang-NM-ACC I see.PST.1SG
- (35) *[Imné [pasu gəčən tol-meke] pureŋaj-mə-m] užənam.
 horse field from come-GER.PR fall-NM-ACC see.PST.1SG
 Intended: 'I saw that the horse fell after coming from the field.' [Serdobolskaya 2008b, (56)]

These observations were not corroborated by the data from my native speaker consultants. Below I reproduce the relevant examples with their judgments: all sentences were accepted. As can be seen, the distribution of unmarked subjects in the variety of Meadow Mari under consideration is broader than that described by Serdobolskaya (2008b).

- (36) a. [Imné šketən tol-mə-m] užənam.
 horse alone come-NM-ACC see.PST.1SG
- b. [ške βerəštəže tuβər kečə-mə-m] məjə užənam.
 SELF place.INE.3SG dress hang-NM-ACC I see.PST.1SG
- c. [Imné [pasu gəčən tol-meke] pureŋaj-mə-m] užənam.
 horse field from come-GER.PR fall-NM-ACC see.PST.1SG
 'I saw that the horse fell after coming from the field.'

That my data do not match the data from the existing literature is not surprising. As mentioned above, Serdobolskaya (2008a, 2008b) worked with the Staryj Torjal dialect, while the present paper focuses on the Morkinsko-Sernur dialect, and the level of inter- and intra-speaker variation is very high in modern Mari.

4.2.4. The function of the nominal. Before I end this section, one other paper deserves to be mentioned. Georgieva (2016) compares the behavior of overt subjects in event nominals in three Uralic languages – Besermyan Udmurt, Komi-Zyryan, and Meadow Mari – noticing some similarities between them. Building upon Serdobolskaya et al. (2012), she demonstrates that in Udmurt, the case marking of embedded subjects is often determined by the syntactic position (i.e., the grammatical function) of the nominalized clause. In direct object nominals the subject can be either genitive or ablative (37).

- (37) Mon až'i [ataj]ləš' / *ataj ulč'ati mən-em-ze].
 I see.PST[1SG] father.ABL father street.PROL go-NM-3SG.ACC
 'I saw dad walking on the street.' [Udmurt; Serdobolskaya et al. 2012, (102)]

In turn, dative nominals allow unmarked subjects (38), and unmarked subjects are also frequently found in nominals embedded in a postpositional phrase (39).



- (38) [Nɨliz vordsk-em-lɨ] šumpot-em intije ...
 daughter.3SG be.born-NM-DAT be.happy-NM instead
 ‘Instead of being happy about the fact that his daughter was born ...’ [Udmurt; Georgieva 2016, (44)]
- (39) [Ataj l̥əkt-em] bere š’iš’kom.
 father come-NM after eat.FUT.1PL
 ‘We will eat after dad has come (home).’ [Udmurt; Serdobolskaya et al. 2012, (119a)]

Georgieva acknowledges that there are exceptions to this rule, that is, object nominals with an unmarked subject. She proposes to treat such “outliers” as involving compounding (I discuss her approach in more detail in section 5). She does not offer a formal analysis of the correlation.

It is worth examining whether the correlation between the grammatical function of the nominal and the marking of its subject extends to Mari. For the variety of Mari under consideration the answer is no. I tested multiple examples with a nominalized clause in the following positions: (i) a subject of predication, (ii) a direct object, (iii) an indirect (dative) object, (iv) an oblique object, and (v) a dependent in an adjunct PP. I did not observe any significant differences in the genitive/unmarked distribution depending on the grammatical function of the event nominal. The general patterns are the same as those observed in direct object nominals (section 4.1): inanimate subjects are preferably (but not always) unmarked, animate subjects are preferably (but not always) genitive, [+human] subjects are almost exclusively genitive, and pronominal subjects are always genitive. Some examples with inanimate subjects are given below, in addition to the direct object examples in section 4.1; for a complete list of possible contexts see the [Appendix](#).

(40) *a subject of predication*

- a. [Mardež dene **βaze** šalanə-me] məjəm öräktaren.
 wind with vase break.ITV-NM I.ACC surprise.PST.3SG
 ‘I was surprised that a/the vase was broken by the wind.’
- b. [Mardež dene **βazən** šalanə-mə[%](-žə)-m] məjəm öräktaren.
 wind with vase.GEN break.ITV-NM-3SG-ACC I.ACC surprise.PST.3SG
 Consultant A: acceptable only with the INFL.
 Consultant B: acceptable but worse than with the unmarked S.

(41) *a dative object*

- a. [Mardež dene **βaze** šalanə-mə-lan] nígö örän
 wind with vase break.ITV-NM-DAT nobody be.surprised.GER
 ogəl.
 be.NEG.3SG
 ‘Nobody was surprised that a/the vase was broken by the wind.’
 Consultant A: possible but worse than Sgen. Consultant B: preferred.



- b. [Mardež dene **βazən** šalanə-mə(-ž)-lan]
 wind with vase.GEN break.ITV-NM-3SG-DAT
 nígö örən ogəl.
 nobody be.surprised.GER be.NEG.3SG
 Consultant A: preferred. Consultant B: acceptable.

(42) *an oblique object*

- a. [[Mardež dene **βaze** šalanə-me] nergen] kalaskalenət.
 wind with vase break.ITV-NM about talk.PST.3PL
 ‘They talked about a/the vase being broken by the wind.’
- b. [[Mardež dene **βazən** šalanə-m(e/ə-že)] nergen] kalaskalenət.
 wind with vase.GEN break.ITV-NM-3SG about talk.PST.3PL
 Both consultants: acceptable.

(43) *a PP adjunct*

- a. [[Mardež dene **βaze** šalanə-mə-lan] köra]
 wind with vase break.ITV-NM-DAT because
 Vaslij ekspedicijəške kajen ogəl.
 V. expedition.ILL go.GER be.NEG.3SG
 ‘Vaslij didn’t go to the expedition because a/the vase was broken by the wind.’
- b. [[Mardež dene **βazən** šalanə-mə(-ž)-lan] köra]
 wind with vase.GEN break.ITV-NM-3SG-DAT because
 Vaslij ekspedicijəške kajen ogəl.
 V. expedition.ILL go.GER be.NEG.3SG
 Both consultants: acceptable.

4.3. Interim summary

To summarize, event nominals in Mari allow overt referentially independent subjects, which are either marked genitive or morphologically unmarked. A genitive subject can, but does not have to, be accompanied by an inflection on the event nominal matching its person and number features. Having an INFL is also possible when the subject of an event nominal is silent. In this case, the presence of an INFL facilitates interpretation. When both a genitive subject and a matching INFL are present, the subject is perceived as being emphasized.

There are several strict rules that regulate the genitive/unmarked alternation: (i) unmarked subjects are impossible with an INFL, and (ii) all overt pronominal subjects must be morphologically marked (cf. section 2 on participles). In addition to this, several tendencies should be pointed out: unmarked subjects tend to be inanimate and non-specific, while genitive subjects tend to be animate and specific. The marking of the subject does not correlate with its thematic role and the syntactic function of the event nominal.



The next section focuses on the distribution of overt subjects and INFLs in temporal gerunds. As I show, it is virtually identical to that in event nominals, which is not necessarily expected if the two are separate categories. I attempt to explain the similarities in section 5.2, where I propose to analyze gerunds as postpositional phrases with an event nominal dependent.

5. TEMPORAL GERUNDS

5.1. Overt subjects and INFLs in temporal gerunds

Mari has three types of temporal gerunds:

- (i) gerunds of prior action ending with *-mek(e)*
cf. in English *after having done something ...*
- (ii) gerunds of future action with *-meš(ke)*
cf. *before doing something ...*
- (iii) gerunds of simultaneous action with *-šəla*
cf. *while doing something ...*

The three constructions are exemplified in (44).

- (44) a. Erla, [pašam əštə-**meke**], kofem jüam.
tomorrow work.ACC do-GER.PR coffee.ACC drink.NPST.1SG
'Tomorrow after working I will drink coffee.' [Riese, Bradley & Yefremova 2022, 250]
- b. Erla, [pašam əštə-**meške**], kofem jüam.
tomorrow work.ACC do-GER.FUT coffee.ACC drink.NPST.1SG
'Tomorrow before working I will drink coffee.' [ibid.]
- c. Erla, [pašam əštə-**šəla**], kofem jüam.
tomorrow work.ACC do-GER.SIM coffee.ACC drink.NPST.1SG
'Tomorrow while working I will drink coffee.' [ibid.]

The three types of gerunds all allow INFLs, but only gerunds of prior and future action are used productively with overt subjects. According to Riese, Bradley & Yefremova (2022), gerunds of simultaneous action are compatible only with silent subjects that are coreferent with the matrix subject. The native speaker consultants occasionally accepted examples with an overt embedded subject (45) but did not produce such sentences themselves.¹⁵ (Notice how in (45b) an INFL is positioned inside *šəla*, resembling an interfix; this will become important in section 5.2.)

¹⁵Occasional isolated examples of *-šəla* gerunds with an overt subject are also found in the Meadow Mari corpus Korp (http://gtweb.uit.no/u_korp/?mode=mhr#!lang=en). I am grateful to a reviewer for drawing my attention to these data.



- (45) a. ?[**Joltašəže-βlak** uβerəm koləšt-šəla] Vaša
 friend.3SG-PL news.ACC listen-GER.SIM V.
 möngö toleš.
 home come.NPST.3SG
 ‘Vasja will come home when his friends are listening to the news.’
- b. [**Joltašəže-βlakən** uβerəm koləšt-šə(-št-)la] Vaša
 friend.3SG-PL.GEN news.ACC listen-GER.SIM-3PL V.
 möngö toleš.
 home come.NPST.3SG
 Preferably: ‘Vasja will come home listening to his friends’ news.’
 Possible, less felicitous: ‘Vasja will come home when his friends are listening to the news.’

According to Riese, Bradley & Yefremova (2022, 268–273), overt subjects in temporal gerunds can be either genitive or unmarked. The grammar further reports that animate nouns show a preference for the genitive marking. In addition to this, it is stated explicitly that all personal pronouns must be marked genitive when used as an embedded subject. The elicited data corroborate these observations.

Unmarked subjects are incompatible with **INFLs** (46).

- (46) a. [**Mardež** oknam šalatə-mek(e/ə-*žə)] Vaša Oleglan jəngərtəš.
 wind window.ACC break.TV-GER.PR-3SG V. O.DAT call.PST.3SG
 ‘Vasja called Oleg after (the) wind broke a/the window.’
- b. [**Kniga** puren kajə-mešk(e/ə-*žə)] Vaša Oleglan jəngərtəš.
 book enter.GER go-GER.FUT-3SG V. O.DAT call.PST.3SG
 ‘Vasja called Oleg before a/the book fell down.’

Pronominal subjects must bear a genitive suffix (47).

- (47) [**Təjən** / *təj kajə-meške(-t)] məj təlat ik sekretəm
 you.SG-GEN you.SG go-GER.FUT-2SG I you.DAT one secret.ACC
 ojlem.
 tell.NPST.1SG
 with *təjən* and without *t*: ‘Before you go I’ll tell you one secret.’
 with both *təjən* and *t*: ‘Before YOU go I’ll tell you one secret.’

Similarly to event nominals, a pronominal subject in a temporal gerund can appear without a matching INFL (47). It can also remain silent when an INFL is present (48). When both a genitive subject and an INFL are realized overtly the former receives a more emphatic interpretation, as indicated in the translation in (47).

- (48) [*pro* kajə-meške-t] məj təlat ik sekretəm ojlem.
 go-GER.FUT-2SG I you.DAT one secret.ACC tell.NPST.1SG
 ‘Before you go I’ll tell you one secret.’



INFLs are also optional when embedded subjects are referentially independent DPs. The interpretational contrast between sentences without an INFL and those with both an INFL and a genitive subject is shown in (49).

- (49) a. [Vašan uniβersitetəm tunem pətarə-mek(e/ə-že)] joltašəže-βlak
 V.GEN university.ACC study finish-GER.PR-3SG friend.3SG-PL
 mom əštaš šonat?
 what.ACC do.INF think.NPST.3PL
 without -əže: ‘What do Vasja’s friends intend to do after he finishes the university?’
 with -əže: ‘What do VASJA’s friends intend to do after HE finishes the university?’
 (with an emphasis on Vasja)
- b. [Joltašəže-βlakən knjigam ludən pətarə-mešk(e/ə-št)],
 friend.3SG-PL.GEN book.ACC read.GER finish-GER.FUT-3PL
 Vaša eše ik serəšəm βoza.
 V. still one letter.ACC write.NPST.3SG
 without -əšt: ‘Before his friends finish the book, Vasja will still write one letter.’
 with -əšt: ‘Before HIS FRIENDS finish the book, Vasja will still write one letter.’

5.2. The genitive/unmarked alternation in temporal gerunds

The genitive/unmarked alternation in temporal gerunds is regulated by the **same** generalizations as that in event nominals. **Animate** subjects, especially [+human] ones, are preferably marked genitive, as shown in (50). I observed the same difference between the consultants’ individual grammars as in the case of event nominals, with Consultant A occasionally allowing (though not producing) sentences with an unmarked [+human] subject and Consultant B being more restrictive in this respect.

(50) *animate subjects*

- a. [Vaša*(-n) uniβersitetəm tunem pətarə-mek(e/ə-že)]
 V.-GEN university.ACC study finish-GER.PR-3SG
 joltašəže-βlak mom əštaš šonat?
 friend.3SG-PL what.ACC do.INF think.NPST.3PL
 ‘What do Vasja’s friends intend to do after he finishes the university?’
- b. [Joltašəže-βlak%(-ən) knjigam ludən pətarə-mešk(e/ə-št)], Vaša
 friend-3SG-PL book.ACC read.GER finish-GER.FUT V.
 eše ik serəšəm βoza.
 still one letter.ACC write.NPST.3SG
 ‘Before his friends finish the book, Vasja will still write one letter.’
 Consultant A: acceptable without -ən. Consultant B: not acceptable without -ən
 with -ən another reading is possible: ‘Before finishing reading his friends’ book ...’



Inanimate subjects can stay morphologically unmarked (51). Consultant A generally preferred sentences with a GEN embedded subject, regardless of the animateness of the latter. Consultant B strongly preferred inanimate subjects to remain unmarked.

(51) *inanimate subjects*

- a. [Mardež oknam šalatə-meke] Vaša Oleglan jəngərtəš.
wind window.ACC break.TV-GER.PR V. O.DAT call.PST.3SG
'Vasja called Oleg after (the) wind broke a/the window.'
- b. %[Mardežən oknam šalatə-mek(e/ə-že)] Vaša Oleglan jəngərtəš.
wind.GEN window.ACC break.TV-GER.PR-3SG V. O.DAT call.PST.3SG
'Vasja called Oleg after (the) wind broke a/the window.'
Consultant A: acceptable. Consultant B: not acceptable.
- c. [Kniga puren kajə-meške] Vaša Oleglan jəngərtəš.
book fall.GER go-GER.FUT V. O.DAT call.PST.3SG
'Vasja called Oleg before a/the book fell.'
- d. %[Knigan puren kajə-mešk(e/ə-že)] Vaša Oleglan jəngərtəš.
book.GEN fall.GER go-GER.FUT-3SG V. O.DAT call.PST.3SG
'Vasja called Oleg before a/the book fell.'
Consultant A: acceptable. Consultant B: not acceptable.

As in event nominals, inanimate embedded subjects in temporal gerunds do not have to be bare nominal phrases. For instance, they allow modification by an adjective, as in (52).

(52) *inanimate modified subjects*

- a. [βijan mardež(-%ən) oknam šalatə-meke]
strong wind-GEN window.ACC break.TV-GER.PR
Vaša Oleglan jəngərtəš.
V. O.DAT call.PST.3SG
'Vasja called Oleg after the strong wind broke a/the window.'
Consultant A: preferred with *-n*. Consultant B: preferred without *-n*.
- b. [Kugu kniga(-%n) puren kajə-meške] Vaša Oleglan jəngərtəš.
big book-GEN fall.GER go-GER.FUT V. O.DAT call.PST.3SG
'Vasja called Oleg before a/the big book fell.'
Consultant A: preferred with *-n*. Consultant B: preferred without *-n*.

5.3. Temporal gerunds as PPs

Comparing the data from section 4 and section 5 reveals a striking similarity in the distribution of subjects and INFLs between event nominals and temporal gerunds in Mari. One might



suggest that subject DPs and INFLs behave the same way in **all** non-finite contexts, but this is not true. As discussed in section 2, Mari participial modifiers reject INFLs. Similarly, *-aš* infinitives disallow genitive and unmarked subjects and have more restricted INFL usage (Burukina 2023b). Affirmative instructive gerunds with the suffix *-n* also reject genitive subjects and INFLs (Riese, Bradley & Yefremova 2022, 263–264). This highlights the unexpected uniformity between event nominals and temporal gerunds, especially if they are considered distinct grammatical categories.

I propose that gerunds are, in fact, event nominals combined with a postposition or a lexical case, the latter being analyzed as a suffixal P (on affixal Ps see Riemsdijk & Huybregts 2002; Asbury et al. 2007; Simonenko & Leontyev 2012; Pleshak 2019; Burukina 2023a on Mari in particular). While a diachronic link between event nominals and gerunds is well established (Berezcki 2002), synchronic descriptions of Meadow and Hill Mari typically treat these constructions as separate categories (e.g., Alhoniemi 1993; Savatkova 2002; Riese, Bradley & Yefremova 2022; Kashkin et al. 2023). To my knowledge, both descriptive and theoretical work on Mari (and other Uralic languages) draws a line between the two types of constructions without much justification. Event nominals are often described as nominal uses of participles and temporal gerunds as broadly defined *converbs* and *dejepričastija*. I argue for extending the historical PP analysis to modern Mari, as it better captures the semantic and syntactic behavior of these forms.¹⁶

From a diachronic perspective, the temporal gerund markers go back to combinations of affixal postpositions. The marker of **prior action**, *meke*, stems from the combination of the event nominalizer *m* and the old lative *-ke* (Berezcki 2002, 136; see also Isanbaev 1961).¹⁷ Berezcki (2002, 31) argues that the old lative marker is a continuation of a prolativ suffix. This allows us to hypothesize a connection between lative and the prior action reading: ‘somebody did Y after (lit. through/by) doing X’. The marker of **future action**, *meške*, consists of the nominalizer *m* and the illative *-ške*. The combination straightforwardly derives the desired interpretation ‘somebody did Y before (lit. **into**) doing X’. Finally, the marker of **simultaneous action**, *šəla*, goes back to the combination of *šə* and *la*. The former has been described as either a nominalizing suffix or a participle marker (cf. *məla* forms used instead of *šəla* forms in some North-Western dialects of Mari), while the latter is a so-called modal case; in modern Mari *la* is a clitic productively used, for instance, in comparative constructions. (Cf. in English temporal uses of *as* meaning ‘while’, e.g., *They arrived as we were leaving*.)

The historical data show that, without a doubt, temporal gerunds in Mari originated as PPs with an embedded event nominal. I propose that they have preserved the original complex structure and should still be analyzed as postpositional phrases in modern Mari. This is indicated by the glosses in (53), revised from (44).

¹⁶That temporal gerunds in Mari are postpositional phrases is also advocated by Burukina (2023c) and Georgieva (2024). Both appeal to the semantic segmentability of the gerund markers. Georgieva (2024) also draws support from the syntactic distribution of temporal gerunds. In addition to this, she demonstrates certain parallels between the Mari data and gerunds in other Uralic (primarily, Udmurt) and Turkic languages. Apart from Mari, see also Ylikoski (2003) highlighting a connection between verbal nouns and converbs in Komi-Permyak and Finnish and Georgieva (2023) reanalyzing some converbs in Udmurt as PPs.

¹⁷Galkin (1964) traces *-meke* back to the postposition *mənge/möngo* ‘behind, after’; however, Berezcki (2002, 136) provides arguments against this analysis. I am very grateful to a reviewer for referring me to Berezcki’s work.



- (53) Erla, [pašam {əštə-**me-ke** / əštə-**me-ške** / əštə-**šə-la**}],
 tomorrow work.ACC do-NM-LAT do-NM-ILL do-NM-CMPR
 kofem jüam.
 coffee.ACC drink.NPST.1SG
 ‘Tomorrow after/before/while working I will drink coffee.’

The proposed PP approach has the following advantages. First, it yields compositionally transparent semantics for gerund markers: *through doing X* for gerunds of prior action, *into doing X* for gerunds of future action, and *as doing X* for gerunds of simultaneous action. Second, it straightforwardly accounts for the fact that temporal gerunds can only be used as modifiers (Georgieva 2024), PPs by their nature being predicates (see e.g., Den Dikken 2006). Third, the analysis explains the observed similar distribution of embedded subjects and INFLs in temporal gerunds and event nominals.

Additionally, the PP approach predicts that another marker may potentially intervene between the two parts of the gerund “suffix” (i.e., the nominal *mə/šə* and an affixal postposition). The prediction is confirmed by examples of gerunds of simultaneous action (44) where an INFL is inserted between *šə* and *la*, consistent with the tendency of person-number markers to precede the modal/comparative *la* (Riese, Bradley & Yefremova 2022, 88).

6. SKETCHING OUT A THEORETICAL ACCOUNT

As stated in section 1, the main goal of the paper is to describe the relevant data and to discover the rules and tendencies behind the distribution of overt subjects and INFLs in participial clauses, event nominals, and temporal gerunds (which can be grouped together and analyzed in a uniform way, see sections 5.3 and 6.2). Before I conclude, I would like to touch upon plausible theoretical accounts of the observed patterns and outline what I consider to be the most promising approach. The discussion is couched within the generative grammar framework.

6.1. Licensing unmarked and genitive subjects

The data obtained from two native speaker consultants are summarized in Table 4.

A possible account for the distribution of **unmarked** subjects in nominals has been sketched out by Georgieva (2016) for Besermyan Udmurt. Following the discussion in Fejes (2005), she proposes that unmarked subjects are in fact nominal heads that form compounds with the nominalized predicate. This explains the many restrictions that unmarked subjects in non-finite clauses in Besermyan Udmurt must comply with: they are restricted to R-expressions (i.e., personal pronouns in the subject position must be morphologically marked) and cannot be pluralized or modified. They must also be adjacent to the verbal nominal; that is, no modifier, clitic, or particle can intervene between the two. Georgieva tentatively extends the analysis to Mari, however, she admits that not **all** instances of unmarked subjects should necessarily be analyzed as non-heads of compounds. She does not offer an account for either unmarked non-compound “exceptions” or genitive subjects and INFLs.

While compounding may account for some instances of unmarked subject-like dependents in Mari clausal nominals (cf. in English *reading books* vs. *book reading*), it cannot accommodate



Table 4. Distribution of overt subjects and INFLs

	POSS on the modified noun	INFLs	Personal pronouns	[+human]	[+animate, –human]	[–animate]
Modifying participial clauses						
A	optional, with GEN	NO	only GEN	preferred GEN	GEN/unmarked	
B	strongly preferred, with GEN	NO	only GEN	only GEN	GEN/unmarked	unmarked
Event nominals						
A	–	optional, with GEN	only GEN	preferred GEN	preferred GEN, also unmarked	
B	–	optional, with GEN	only GEN	only GEN	preferred GEN, possibly unmarked	preferred unmarked, possibly GEN
Temporal gerunds						
A	–	optional, with GEN	only GEN	preferred GEN	preferred GEN, also unmarked	
B	–	optional, with GEN	only GEN	only GEN	preferred GEN, possibly unmarked	preferred unmarked, possibly GEN

all relevant data. Recall the examples with non-adjacent, modified, and plural unmarked subjects in section 3 and section 4: these cannot be analyzed as bare nouns adjoined to the head of the event nominal.

I propose a complementary account within the Dependent Case Theory (DCT) framework (Marantz 1991), building on Pleshak's (2022) analysis of Hill Mari participial modifiers. DCT states that case is assigned configurationally and not under agreement with a dedicated functional head and posits the following hierarchy of cases: (i) lexical (tied to a specific thematic role), (ii) dependent (assigned in the presence of another DP in a c-command relation with the target DP), (iii) unmarked (assigned to any DP that has not received a lexical/dependent case), and (iv) default. For Hill Mari participles, Pleshak (2022) argues that morphologically unmarked subjects receive nominative case in the domain where it is the unmarked case, i.e., within the complement of a C head. Genitive subjects are in the domain where genitive is the unmarked case, i.e., within the complement of a D head; see also Burukina (2023a) on genitive being an unmarked case in Meadow Mari DPs. Pleshak proposes that examples with a participial clause and a genitive DP have two possible underlying structures, depending on whether the genitive DP is a true embedded subject or a possessor of the modified noun. In the former case, Pleshak assumes that the participial clause lacks a CP layer, which makes the participial TP a part of the higher nominal domain from a case assignment perspective. The three derivations are schematized in (55), corresponding to the examples in (54). (Pleshak's analysis does not address the presumed absence of an operator in (55b) compared to (55a, c), and its implications for relative clause formation.)



- (54) Vas'a / Vas'a-n ro-mê püşängö
 Vasja Vasja-GEN cut-PTCP.NACT tree
 'the tree cut by Vasja' [Hill Mari; Pleshak 2022, (8), (10)]

- (55) *participial modifiers in Hill Mari (Pleshak 2022)*

a. *unmarked subjects*

[_{NP} [_{CP} Op_i [_C [_{TP} **Vas'a** [_{T'} [_{VP} ... e_i V=ro] T=mê]] C]] [_{NP} ... N=püşängö]]

b. *genitive subjects*

[_{DP} [_{NP} [_{TP} **Vas'an** [_{T'} [_{VP} ... e_i V=ro] T=mê]] [_{NP} ... N=püşängö]] D]

c. *genitive possessors*

[_{DP} **Vas'an**_k [_{NP} [_{CP} Op_i [_C [_{TP} pro_k [_{T'} [_{VP} ... e_i V=ro] T=mê]] C]] [_{NP} t_k [_{N'} ... N=püşängö]] D]

I propose to extend the Dependent Case Theory approach to Meadow Mari with some modifications. First, I assume that all participial relative clauses in Mari are of the same structure and size (CPs). Second, non-finite TPs are deficient compared to finite clauses, unable to independently license DP subjects (cf. accounts of licensing via agreement). However, structurally smaller subjects – nPs and NPs – are allowed in non-finite context. Thus, morphologically **unmarked** subjects in non-finite clauses are caseless nPs/NPs, not nominative DPs. That nominal dependents smaller than DPs can serve as arguments has been independently argued for PPs by [Simonenko & Leontjev \(2012\)](#) and [Volkova \(2014\)](#), i.a. The nP/NP status of unmarked subjects explains their incompatibility with INFLs, assuming that only full DPs can be probed for agreement/feature-sharing. It also captures the correlation between the marking and specificity of embedded subjects, the DP layer being generally associated with specificity and definiteness (and potentially animacy/Person features). Furthermore, as personal pronouns are DPs (e.g., [Déchaine & Wiltschko 2002](#)), they are predicted to be illicit in “unmarked” contexts, which is confirmed by the data: personal pronouns as subjects must be marked genitive.

As for the genitive DPs occurring with participial clauses, recall from section 2 that they exhibit properties of embedded subjects in Consultant A's grammar, while in Consultant B's grammar they pattern with clause-external possessors. To explain this variation, I follow [Pleshak \(2022\)](#) in assuming that participial clauses differ in their opacity. I hypothesize that Consultant A allows CPs with multiple specifier positions; one of them can serve as a landing site for the embedded subject. This movement places the DP in the higher nominal domain, where it receives genitive case. In Consultant B's grammar, CPs have only one specifier position, which in relative clauses is occupied by the operator. The embedded subject remains inside the participial TP. However, a separate DP possessor can be base generated in a higher nominal projection.

The applicability of this approach to event nominals and the status of INFLs is addressed in the following sections. Section 6.2 discusses the structure of event nominals and their relation to participles, while section 6.3 examines the status of INFLs.



6.2. Event nominals as mixed projections

Event nominals show some verbal properties: they denote events, have an argument structure, and are compatible with aspectual modifiers (section 3.1). They are highly productive and show no idiosyncrasy in their internal morphosyntax. It is therefore reasonable to assume that they are formed in syntax and include a verbal core (a TP) as well as some nominal projections. This aligns with previous analyses of deverbal nominalizations built in syntax (Grimshaw 1990; Moulton 2014) and work on mixed verbal-nominal projections, including English gerunds (Bresnan 1997; Borsley & Kornfilt 2000; Alexiadou 2001, i.a.). In a simplified way, their structure can be represented as $[_{[N]P} \dots [_{[V]P} \dots]]$, where $[V]P$ is an extended verbal projection and $[N]P$ is an extended nominal projection.

Event nominals in Mari are derived using the same suffixes as participles: *-m* for affirmative nominals and non-active participles, *-dame* for negative nominals and negative participles, and *-šaš* for future nominals and future/irrealis participles. While one could argue that this is mere homonymy, with *-m* spelling out distinct functional elements (a nominalizer and a participle head), a more unified syntactic analysis capturing the similarity between these constructions is worth pursuing. An attempt to unify participles and nominals has recently been made by Dékány & Georgieva (2020) for Udmurt. They outline possible analytical options, which I list below, adapted to Mari data. In all three scenarios the relative clause is fully saturated and does not contain an operator, and the relevant suffix (e.g., *-m*) spells out the participial head T (55).

I. Event nominals are nominalized participles

A participial clause is selected by a nominalizing head that is responsible for the categorial shift from the verbal category to the nominal category. This is schematized in (56), with the nominalizing head labeled *n*.

- (56) *event nominals, Option I*
 $[_{DP} [_{nP} [_{TP} [_{vP} \dots] T=m] n=\emptyset] D]$

II. Event nominals are participial clauses topped by a single nominal projection (DP)

A D head takes an extended verbal projection directly as its complement; cf. Kornfilt & Whitman (2011) and Pietraszko (2019).

- (57) *event nominals, Option II*
 $[_{DP} [_{TP} [_{vP} \dots] T=m] D]$

III. Event nominals contain a silent N

Event nominals are full DPs whose lexical head, N, is an unpronounced semantically bleached noun (e.g., a silent FACT). The participial clause is merged in the complement position of the silent N.

- (58) *event nominals, Option III*
 $[_{DP} [_{NP} [_{TP} [_{vP} \dots] T=m] N=\emptyset] D]$



The three approaches make different predictions. Option I leaves room for accommodating modifiers of the types restricted to the nominal domain yet associated with the nominalized predicate. This approach is challenged if event nominals are incompatible with numerals, quantifiers, and adjectival modifiers. Indeed, event nominals in Mari appear not to allow numerals (59) and modification by adjectives (60).

- (59) a. ***[Kok** [mardež dene βaz(e/-ən) šalanə-mə-m]]
 two wind with vase break.ITV-NM-ACC
 sajən šarnem.
 well remember.NPST.1SG
 Intended: 'I remember well two occurrences of a vase being broken by the wind.'
- b. [Mardež dene βaz(e/-ən) **kok gana** šalanə-mə-m]
 wind with vase-GEN two time break.ITV-NM-ACC
 sajən šarnem.
 well remember.NPST.1SG
 'I remember well the wind breaking a vase twice.' (the same vase or different vases)
- c. ***Kok** mardež dene βaze šalanen.
 two wind with vase break.ITV.PST.3SG
 Intended: 'A vase was broken twice by the wind.'
- d. Mardež dene βaze **kok gana** šalanen.
 wind with vase two time break.ITV.PST.3SG
 'A vase was broken twice by the wind.'
- (60) a. [Mardež dene **pisən** / #**pise** βaze šalanə-mə-m]
 wind with quick.ADV quick.ADJ vase break.ITV-NM-ACC
 sajən šarnem.
 well remember.NPST.1SG
 with *pisən*: 'I remember well the wind breaking the vase quickly.'
 with *pise*: 'I remember well the wind breaking the quick vase.'
- b. [**Pisən** / #**pise** mardež dene βaze šalanə-mə-m]
 quick.ADV quick.ADJ wind with vase break.ITV-NM-ACC
 sajən šarnem.
 well remember.NPST.1SG
 with *pisən*: 'I remember well the wind breaking the vase quickly.'
 with *pise*: 'I remember well the quick wind breaking the vase.'
- c. Mardež **pisən** / #**pise** βazəm šalatəš.
 wind quick.ADV quick.ADJ vase.ACC break.TV.PST.3SG
 with *pisən*: 'The wind quickly broke the vase.'
 with *pise*: 'The wind broke the quick vase.'

Option II and option III can both explain the ban on numerals and adjectives with event nominals. Under the second approach, such nominals contain only the DP layer, but none of



the lower functional projections NumP, nP, or NP. Under the third approach the modifiers are associated not with the embedded clause but with the silent N head, and the semantic deficiency and phonological silence of the latter can explain the restrictions on modification.

II and III make contrasting predictions when it comes to the compatibility of event nominals with such predicates as *true/false*. As discussed by Moulton (2020), these predicates require an NP dependent and are not compatible with true mixed projections (as in (56) and (57)). The data below demonstrate that in Mari ‘truth’ can be predicated of an event nominal.

- (61) a. [βazəm šalatə-m-em] čən / šoja uleš.
vase.ACC break.TV-NM-1SG truth lie be.NPST.3SG
‘It is truth/a lie that I broke a/the vase.’
- b. [Slon-βlak tūnašte lij-mə-št] čən / šoja uleš.
elephant-PL world.INE be-NM-3PL truth lie be.NPST.3SG
‘It is truth/a lie that elephants exist in the world.’

Taking these data into account, the third analysis, whereby the nominal distribution of *-m* items is due to the presence of a covert N head, is the most promising. It accommodates the relevant data and makes predictions that are borne out.

The structure in (62) reproduces what have been said so far regarding the internal syntax of Mari event nominals, in comparison to the modifying participles.

- (62) a. *event nominals*
[_{DP} [_{NP} [_{TP} DP_{GEN}/NP [T' [_{VP} ...] T=*m*]] N=∅] D]
- b. *modifying participial clauses*
[_{DP} [_{NP} [_{CP} OP_i [_C [_{TP} DP/NP [T' [_{VP} ... e_i V] T=*m*]] C]] [_{NP} ... N]]

When it comes to the distribution of overt subjects in event nominals, the same licensing mechanisms are at play as in participial clauses. The only difference, I suggest, is that a saturated participial dependent of the silent N head in (62b) does not contain a CP layer that would host an operator. This renders the subject DP part of the higher nominal domain. Consequently, it becomes eligible for genitive case assignment, a pattern consistently observed in the individual grammars of both consultants. Alternatively, the subject can be a smaller nP/NP, which remains unmarked. (See section 6.1 on syntactic and semantic restrictions imposed on non-DP subjects.)

6.3. The source of INFLs

Turning our attention to INFLs, one might argue that they spell out the phi-features acquired by a non-finite T via agreement with the embedded subject, in parallel to the subject agreement in finite clauses. However, the following considerations undermine an approach whereby an INFL is directly associated with the embedded T. First, INFLs are not allowed in participial modifiers



and most of infinitival clauses,¹⁸ yet these arguably contain a T head. If INFLs come from the non-finite T why is their distribution so restricted? Second, INFLs are always optional, and their presence/absence correlates with the information structure properties of the sentence and pro-drop. This is not characteristic of the subject agreement in finite clauses, which is always obligatory, regardless of whether the subject is overt or covert, contrastive or not. In addition to this, morphologically, INFLs attested in non-finite clauses are not identical to the verbal inflections in finite clauses (Riese, Bradley & Yefremova 2022); instead, the non-finite INFLs perfectly match the possessive agreement markers, as shown in Table 5.¹⁹ INFLs are not fused with the marker of the non-finite category (e.g., *-mE* or *-mek(e)*) but always attach to it, which contrasts with the behavior of subject agreement in finite clauses, where the person-number marking is regularly fused with the tense marking. While these problems are not insurmountable, they need to be carefully addressed before a T-agreement analysis is adopted.

At the same time, these issues are easily resolved if INFLs are taken to be exponents of a higher head F of the category N associated with the possessive structure (see Dékány 2011, 2018, going back to Mel'chuk 1973, on splitting a possessive phrase into a PossP and an FP). This also explains why INFLs are morphologically identical to the possessive morphemes (section 2.1). Following Burukina (2023a), I suggest that F may probe either only for A features, as in ordinary possessive phrases, or for both A features and A-bar features, as in the case of event nominals (see Lohninger 2022; Lohninger, Kovač & Wurmbrand 2022 on mixed A/A-bar probes). In the latter case it may probe exclusively DPs associated with a contrastive feature.²⁰

Table 5. The person-number marking in various contexts

	POSS el 'country'	non-finite INFLs šalatə-me 'break.TV-PTCP/NM'	finite non-past βuč- 'wait'
1SG	el-em	šalatə-m-em	βuč-em
2SG	el-et	šalatə-m-et	βuč-et
3SG	el-že	šalatə-mə-že	βuč-a
1PL	el-na	šalatə-m-na	βuč-ena
2PL	el-da	šalatə-m-da	βuč-eda
3PL	el-əšt	šalatə-mə-št	βuč-at

¹⁸See Burukina (2023b) on exceptional inflected infinitives in Mari, who argues that the subject-related person-number marker in such constructions is a clitic located above the non-finite TP/FinP.

¹⁹The two also match the person-number marking that cross-references the Ground dependent in postpositional phrases (PPs); see Burukina (2023a) for a discussion and an analysis.

²⁰The suggested account opens several questions: Why is F in mixed nominals not identical to F in ordinary DPs? What exactly is the role of F? I leave these issues to be addressed by future research.



7. CONCLUSION

The paper examined the distribution of overt subjects and subject-related person-number marking in non-finite clauses in Meadow Mari and provided answers to the following questions.

I. *In what constructions are overt subjects and INFLs attested and is there a strong correlation between the two phenomena?*

Overt subjects are attested in modifying participial clauses, event nominals, and temporal gerunds. INFLs occur in event nominals and gerunds. There is a strong correlation between INFLs and genitive subjects: aside from participial clauses, INFLs are possible whenever genitive subjects are allowed. INFLs are generally incompatible with unmarked overt subjects.

II. *Does the choice of the subject case marking correlate with any syntactic properties of the non-finite construction and/or the properties of the subject itself?*

The three types of non-finite constructions under consideration allow both genitive and unmarked subjects. The unmarked option is more restricted than the genitive one. Inanimate subjects are regularly left unmarked (though they can also sometimes bear a genitive suffix), and animate non-human subjects often alternate between the two marking options. Animate [+human] subjects are usually marked genitive. Pronominal subjects must be genitive. There is a correlation between the presence/absence of a genitive suffix on the subject and its being interpreted as specific/non-specific, respectively. I did not find any correlation between the marking of the embedded subject and the syntactic function of the event nominal (reported for Udmurt by [Georgieva 2016](#)).

III. *Does the presence/absence of an INFL correlate with any syntactic properties of the non-finite constructions, the subject case marking, and/or some other properties of the sentence?*

INFLs are only allowed with covert subjects and overt genitive subjects. The presence of an INFL correlates with the information-structure properties of the sentences and subject pro-drop.

The goal of the paper was to uncover the main empirical patterns of the mutual distribution of overt subjects and INFLs in non-finite clauses in Meadow Mari. Focusing primarily on elicited data allowed me to compare the individual grammars of two native speakers and to come up with generalizations as well as to discover several microparameters.

Although the present work is largely descriptive in nature, it also contributes to a better understanding of the structures of the constructions under consideration. I argued that temporal gerunds should be analyzed as event nominals embedded in a postpositional phrase, which explains the striking similarities between the two types of non-finite environments. Building upon [Dékány & Georgieva \(2020\)](#) on Udmurt, I considered several possible ways of bringing together event nominals and participial modifiers in Mari, which share the morphology. As I showed, a covert N account is the most promising.

I discussed two possible formal approaches to overt subjects: a composite analysis suggested by [Georgieva \(2016\)](#) for nominals with unmarked subjects in Udmurt and a Dependent Case Theory approach put forward by [Pleshak \(2022\)](#) for participial clauses with overt subjects in Hill Mari. I outlined a modified version of Pleshak's account that successfully captures all the relevant data. I also argued that INFLs should not be analyzed as exponents of phi-features



acquired by the non-finite T head via agreement with the embedded subject. The future research, which it was my goal to stimulate, will hopefully make the final decision on regulating the distribution of INFLs.

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GLOSSING ABBREVIATIONS

ABL	ablative
ACC	accusative
COMP	complementizer
CMPR	comparative
DAT	dative
FUT	future
GEN	genitive
GER	gerund
GER.FUT	gerund of future action
GER.PR	gerund of prior action
GER.SIM	gerund of simultaneous action
ILL	illative
IN	inessive
INF	infinitive
NEG	negation
NM	event nominal
NM.FUT	future/irrealis nominal
NPST	non-past
PL	plural
PTCP.ACT	active participle
SG	singular
PROL	prolative
PST	past
PTCP.NACT	non-active (passive) participle
PTCP.FUT	future/irrealis participle
TV	transitive



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Appendix. Event nominals in various syntactic positions

(63) *subject nominals*

- a. [Mardež dene **βaze** šalanə-me] məjəm örəktaren.
 wind with vase break.ITV-NM I.ACC surprise.PST.3SG
 ‘I was surprised that a/the vase was broken by the wind.’
- b. [Mardež dene **βazən** šalanə-mə(-žə)-m] məjəm örəktaren.
 wind with vase- break.ITV-NM-3SG- I.ACC surprise.PST.3SG
 GEN ACC
 Consultant A: acceptable.
 Consultant B: acceptable but worse than *βaze*.
- c. [**Slon-βlak** tūnašte lij-me / ul-mo] məjəm örəktaren.
 elephant-PL world.INE be-NM be-NM I.ACC surprise.PST.3SG
 ‘I was surprised that elephants exist in the world.’
 Both consultants: acceptable.
- d. [**Slon-βlakən** tūnašte lij-m^{%(e/ə-št)} / ul-m(o/ə-št) məjəm
 elephant-PL.GEN world.INE be-NM-3PL be-NM-3PL I.ACC
 örəktaren.
 surprise.PST.3SG
- e. * [**Joča-βlak** βazəm šalatə-me] məjəm örəktaren.
 child-PL vase.ACC break.TV-NM I.ACC surprise.PST.3SG
 ‘I was surprised that (the) children broke a/the vase.’
 Both consultants: not acceptable.
- f. [**Joča-βlakən** βazəm šalatə-m^{%(e/ə-št)}] məjəm örəktaren.
 child-PL.GEN vase.ACC break.TV-NM-3PL I.ACC surprise.PST.3SG



(64) *dative nominals*

- a. [Mardež dene **βaze** šalanə-mə-lan] nígö örən
 wind with vase break.ITV-NM-DAT nobody be.surprised.GER
 ogəl.
 be.NEG.3SG
 ‘Nobody was surprised that a/the vase was broken by the wind.’
 Consultant A: possible but worse than *βazən*. Consultant B: preferred.
- b. [Mardež dene **βazən** šalanə-mə(-ž)-lan]
 wind with vase.GEN break.ITV-NM-3SG-DAT
 nígö örən ogəl.
 nobody be.surprised.GER be.NEG.3SG
 Consultant A: preferred. Consultant B: acceptable.
- c. [**Slon-βlak** tūnašte lij-mə-lan / ul-mə-lan]
 elephant-PL world.INE be-NM-DAT be-NM-DAT
 nígö örən ogəl.
 nobody be.surprised.GER be.NEG.3SG
 ‘Nobody was surprised that elephants exist in the world.’
 Both consultants: acceptable.
- d. [**Slon-βlakən** tūnašte lij-mə(-št)-lan / ul-mə(-št)-lan]
 elephant-PL.GEN world.INE be-NM-3PL-DAT be-NM-3PL-DAT
 nígö örən ogəl.
 nobody be.surprised.GER be.NEG.3SG
 Consultant A: acceptable. Consultant B: preferred.
- e. * [**Joča-βlak** βazəm šalatə-mə-lan]
 child-PL vase.ACC break.TV-NM-DAT
 nígö örən ogəl.
 nobody be.surprised.GER be.NEG.3SG
 Intended: ‘Nobody was surprised that (the) children broke a/the vase.’
 Both consultants: not acceptable.
- f. [**Joča-βlakən** βazəm šalatə-mə(-št)-lan]
 child-PL.GEN vase.ACC break.TV-NM-3PL-DAT
 nígö örən ogəl.
 nobody be.surprised.GER be.NEG.3SG

(65) *oblique object nominals*

- a. [[Mardež dene **βaze** šalanə-me] nergen] kalaskalenət.
 wind with vase break.ITV-NM about talk.PST.3PL
 ‘They talked about a/the vase being broken by the wind.’



- b. [[Mardež dene **βazən** šalanə-m(e/ə-že)] nergen] kalaskalenət.
wind with vase.GEN break.ITV-NM-3SG about talk.PST.3PL
Both consultants: acceptable.
- c. %Aspirant-βlak [[**slon-βlak** tūnašte lij-me / ul-mo] nergen] kalaskalenət.
postgrad-PL elephant-PL world.INE be-NM be-NM about talk.PST.3PL
‘The postgraduate students talked about elephants existing in the world.’
Consultant A: acceptable. Consultant B: not acceptable.
- d. Aspirant-βlak [[**slon-βlakən** tūnašte lij-m(e/ə-št) / ul-m(o/ə-št)] nergen]
postgrad-PL elephant-PL.GEN world.INE be-NM-3PL be-NM-3PL about
kalaskalenət.
talk.PST.3PL
Consultant A: preferred. Consultant B: acceptable.
- e. *Aspirant-βlak [[**joča-βlak** βazəm šalatə-me] nergen] kalaskalenət.
postgrad-PL child-PL vase.ACC break.TV-NM about talk.PST.3PL
Intended: ‘The postgraduate students talked about (the) children breaking a/the vase.’
Both consultants: not acceptable.
- f. Aspirant-βlak [[**joča-βlakən** βazəm šalatə-m(e/ə-št)] nergen]
postgrad-PL child-PL.GEN vase.ACC break.TV-NM-3PL about
kalaskalenət.
talk.PST.3PL

(66) *nominals in PP adjuncts*

- a. [[Mardež dene **βaze** šalanə-mə-lan] kōra]
wind with vase break.ITV-NM-DAT because
Vaslij ekspedicijəške kajen ogəl.
V. expedition.ILL go.GER be.NEG.3SG
‘Vaslij didn’t go to the expedition because a/the vase was broken by the wind.’
- b. [[Mardež dene **βazən** šalanə-mə(-ž)-lan] kōra]
wind with vase.GEN break.ITV-NM-3SG-DAT because
Vaslij ekspedicijəške kajen ogəl.
V. expedition.ILL go.GER be.NEG.3SG
Both consultants: acceptable.
- c. [[**Slon-βlak** tūnašte ul-mə-lan] kōra]
elephant-PL world.INE be-NM-DAT because
Akraj šəmləze lijaš šonen pəšten.
A. scientist be.INF think.GER put.PST.3SG
‘Akraj decided to become a scientist because elephants exist in the world.’
(i.e., he wanted to study elephants) Both consultants: acceptable.



- d. [[**Slon-βlakən** tūinašte ul-mə(-št)-lan] köra]
 elephant-PL.GEN world.INE be-NM-3PL-DAT because
 Akpaj šəmləze lijaš šonen pəšten.
 A. scientist be.INF think.GER place.PST.3SG
- e. ?/*[[**Jocə-βlak** βazəm šalatə-mə-lan] köra]
 child-PL vase.ACC break.TV-NM-DAT because
 Vaslij ekspedicijəške kajen ogəl.
 V. expedition.ILL go.GER be.NEG.3SG
 Intended: ‘Vaslij didn’t go to the expedition because (the) children broke a/the vase.’
 Consultant A: marginally acceptable. Consultant B: not acceptable.
- f. [[**Jocə-βlakən** βazəm šalatə-mə(-št)-lan] köra]
 child-PL,GEN vase.ACC break.TV-NM-3PL-DAT because
 Vaslij ekspedicijəške kajen ogəl.
 V. expedition.ILL go.GER be.NEG.3SG

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