# On the syntax of comitative constructions in some Finno-Ugric languages

*Irina Khomchenkova, irina.khomchenkova@yandex.ru*
*Lomonosov Moscow State University / Vinogradov Russian Language Institute, RAS*

This paper deals with comitative markers and coordinating conjunctions in some Finno-Ugric languages, mainly in Hill Mari and in Kazym Khanty using the data of other languages as an intragenetic background. In Hill Mari there is a comitative-instrumental postposition *dono* and a coordinating conjunction *dä*, the latter was borrowed from Russian (Galkin, 1964: 177, Majtinskaja, 1982: 103). In Khanty there is a comitative postposition *piλa*[1] and an additive particle *pa*, which functions (inter alia) as a coordinating conjunction. I will analyze the structure of comitative constructions (presented in Table 1) relying on my field data.[2]

| Construction | Hill Mari | Khanty |
|---|---|---|
| coordinating construction | [*X dä Y*] *V-PL* | [*X pa Y*] *V-DU*[3] |
| coordinating comitative construction | ? *X Y dono V-PL* | ? *X Y piλa V-DU* |
| (genuine) comitative construction | *X* [*Y dono*] *V-SG* | *X* [*Y piλa*] *V-SG* |
| plural pronoun construction (PPC) | [*Pron.PL Y dono*] *V-PL* | [*Pron.DU Y piλa*] *V-DU* |

Table 1. Constructions under investigation.

A (genuine) comitative construction is a "morphosyntactic construction used to express a non-obligatory participant set in a given situation S, such that: (i) the predicate denoting S is not repeated more than once; (ii) the individual participants making up the participant set are expressed separately; (iii) the expressions denoting these participants differ in structural rank (Arkhipov, 2009: 224). In a coordinating comitative construction the central NP and the comitative phrase (ComP) form a constituent which refers to a plural object and (usually) requires plural verbal agreement. A plural pronoun construction involves a plural pronoun and a comitative phrase, the referent of which is included in the referent of a pronoun.

In the languages of the world a comitative proper can be analyzed as a VP-adjunct (e.g. Vassilieva, Larson, 2001; Skrabalova, 2003) or as a DP-adjunct (Ionin, Matushanski, 2002). ComP in comitative coordination can be analyzed as a DP-adjunct (Ionin, Matushansky, 2002) or it can be analyzed as conjunctionless ordinary coordination (Dyła, 1988). In plural pronoun constructions a comitative phrase can be analyzed as the complement of a pronoun (Vassilieva, Larson, 2001), as a conjunct (Vassilieva, 2005) or as a DP-adjunct (Ionin, Matushansky, 2002).

In my paper I will argue that both in Khanty and in Hill Mari:

1. In the comitative proper construction ComP is a VP-adjunct, since ComP can be associated only with the subject (1-2).

2. Construction [*X Y COM V-PL/DU*] is not a coordinating comitative construction, since central NP and ComP do not form a constituent – ComP can be extracted as in comitative proper (3). In (4) a part of a coordinated structure cannot be extracted.

3. Construction [*X Y COM V-PL/DU*] has some coordinating properties, e.g. it allows distributive interpretation as in coordination, unlike in comitative proper constructions (5).

4. ComP in plural pronoun construction is a DP-adjunct, since it can be associated not only with the subject (6) in contrast to other comitative constructions (1-2). There is not enough evidence to analyze ComP either as a complement or as a conjunct, e.g., because ComP can be detached from the central NP (7).

---

[1] In Tegi Khanty (Shapiro, 2011) the comitative postposition has two forms: *piλ-a* (with-DAT) and *piλ-ən* (with-LOC). However, in Kazym Khanty the form *piλən* has not been attested.

[2] The data were collected in the Kuznetsovo village (Mari El, Russia) in 2017–2018 and in the Kazym village (Khanty-Mansi Autonomous District, Russia) in 2018.

[3] In Khanty there is a ternary opposition: SG, DU and PL, while in Hill Mari there is a binary one: SG and PL.

5. It follows from points 2 and 3 that in the case of comitatives verbal agreement can be non-singular even if ComP behaves as an adjunct to VP. However, this is not typical of all Finno-Ugric languages, e.g. in Estonian plural verbal agreement with comitatives is extremely rare and happens only if ComP is not detached from the central NP (Erelt, 2008: 103).

In the talk I will elaborate on these points and provide a possible analysis for this range of facts.

## References

Arkhipov, A. (2009) *Comitative as a cross-linguistically valid category*. New Challenges in Typology: Transcending the Borders and Refining the Distinctions, Alexandre Arkhipov and Patience Epps (eds.), 223-246. Berlin, NewYork: Mouton de Gruyter.

Dyła, S. (1988) *Quasi-Comitative Coordination in Polish*. Linguistics 26. P. 383–414.

Erelt, M. (2008) *Concerning the relationship of the comitative construction to the coordinating construction in Estonian*. Linguistica Uralica XLIV 2. P. 97–107.

Galkin, I. (1964) *Istoricheskaja grammatica marijskogo jazyka, morfologia*. [The historical grammar of Mari: morphology.] Yoshkar-Ola: Marijskoe knizhnoje izdat'el'stvo.

Ionin, T., Matushansky, O. (2003) *DPs with a Twist: A Unified Analysis of Russian Comitatives*. W. Browne, J.-Y. Kim, B.H. Partee, R.A. Rothstein (Eds.), Formal Approaches to Slavic Linguistics 11, pp. 255–274. Michigan Slavic Publications.

Majtinskaja, K. (1982) *Sluzhebnye slova v finno-ugorskih yazykah*. [Function words in Finno-Ugric languages] Moscow: Nauka, 1982.

Shapiro, M. (2011) *Postpositions in Tegi Khanty*. Fieldwork report.

Vassilieva, M. (2005) *Associative and Pronominal Plurality*. Ph.D. dissertation, SUNY Stony
Skrabalova, H. (2003) *Comitative constructions in Czech*. P. Kosta et al. P. Lang (Eds.) Formal investigations into Slavic languages. Frankfurt-am-Main, Germany.

Vassilieva, M., Larson R. (2001) *The semantics of the Plural Pronoun Construction*. Rachel Hastings et al. (eds.), Proceedings of SALT 11, CLC Publications, Ithaca, NY, pp. 449-465.

## Examples

(1)  *ti    toma  maša-n  dä  pet'a-n  /  \*maša-n pet'a  dono*          [Hill Mari, POSS]
this  house  M.-GEN  and  P.-GEN      M-GEN   P.       with
'This house belongs to Mary and Peter.'

(2)  *maša* *šǝrgǝ̑-š*    *pet'ä  dono*  *ke-n*                          [Hill Mari, Sub]
M.    forest-ILL   P.     with  go-PRET
'Mary went to the forest with Peter.'

(3)  *mašaj-en  wɵnt-a    pet'aj-en  piλ-a*       *măn-ǝs  /    măn-s-ǝŋǝn*      [Khanty]
M.-P.2SG  forest-DAT  P.-P.2SG   with-DAT  go-PST.3SG    go-PST-3DU
'Mary went to forest with Peter.'

(4)  *\*mašaj-en  wɵnt-a     pa    dašaj-en   măn-s-ǝŋǝn*                    [Khanty]
M.-P.2SG   forest-DAT  ADD   D.-P.2SG    go-PST-3DU
Expected: 'Mary went to forest with Peter.'

(5)  *maša jǝmǝ̑-lan* *kat'a  dono* *ǝnän-ät* /         *\*ǝnän-ä*             [Hill Mari]
M.    god-DAT  K.     with   believe-NPST.3PL  believe-NPST.3SG
'Mary and Kate believe in God.'

(6)  *pet'aj-en* *min-ɛmn-a        aŋk-ɛm     piλ-a*  *maw  mă-s*           [Khanty]
P.-P.2SG   we.DU-P.1DU-DAT  mother-P.1SG  with-DAT candy  give-PST.3SG
'Peter gave me and my mother a candy.'

(7)  *tä    mǝn'  tumaj-em     daša  dono* *lapka-š  ke-dä*            [Hill Mari]
you.PL  I      think-NPST.1SG  D.     with   shop-ILL  go-NPST.2PL
'I think, you and Daria, the two together will go to the shop.'