

Typological and diachronic tendencies of Mordvinic demonstratives

Demonstratives, like many other pronouns, belong to the old inherited Uralic vocabulary. However, there is considerable language- and branch-specific divergence. This article examines the typological and diachronic characteristics of Mordvinic pronouns within the Uralic context. Typologically and diachronically, the Mordvinic demonstrative system is unique because the same demonstrative has appeared in both pre- and postnominal positions. In the latter case, certain singular and plural demonstratives have secondarily developed into suffixed definiteness markers. This development has increased the number of categories involved in definiteness marking.

The deictic system of Mordvinic distinguishes between an unambiguous distance-based triad of proximal, medial and distal demonstratives. This pattern is similar to the assumed inherited pattern of the Finnic languages although it is less symmetric in Mordvinic. The speaker-oriented proximal (Erzya *t'e*, Moksha *t'ä* 'this; it': E *ñe*, M *ñä* 'these; they') and distal pronouns (E M *tona* 'that' : E M *nona* 'those') have singular-plural pairs, whereas the plural form of the endophoric E *še*, M *šä* 'it' overlaps with that of the proximal one. Alternatively, analogical plural forms based on the plural marker *-t* are used.

Variation in plural forms increases asymmetry in the deictic system and inflectional paradigms of demonstratives. Consequently, grammars of Mordvinic present the inflection of demonstratives in divergent ways, either as slightly deficient (Erzya) or meager (Moksha). The diachronic development and increase of functionally specific forms derived from demonstratives is illustrated by the high number of demonstrative-based adverbs.

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