ABOUT THE DIFFICULTY OF DETERMINING
THE LEXICAL CLASSES OF THE MOKSHA LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT: The paper deals with the Moksha language belonging to the Uralic family. It begins with a presentation of Moksha and its oldest attestations. It then examines approaches of the parts of speech and lexical classes in that language as developed by a number of authors, mainly Ahlquist (1861) and Aliamkin (2000). The paper illustrates the difficulties and issues faced when applying the framework inherited from Greek and Latin traditions to languages displaying other typological features than the Indo-European mold.
KEYWORDS: Moksha; Uralic; Part of speech, Lexicography; Typology.

1. INTRODUCTION

The paper deals with the Moksha language belonging to the Uralic family. After a presentation of present-day Moksha and of its historical attestations the paper examines approaches of the parts of speech and lexical classes in this language as developed by a number of authors, especially Ahlquist (1861) and Aliamkin (2000), who provide the most detailed theories.
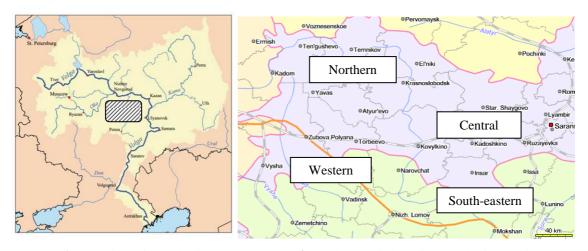
2. PRESENTATION OF THE MOKSHA LANGUAGE

Moksha is a Uralic language, spoken in the Russian Federation. Together with Erzya it constitutes the two main branches of Mordvin. The word *<moksha>* is a direct transliteration of Cyrillic мокша. It is used to describe this language in contemporary texts. But other words have been used in the past to designate Mordvins. Many Mokshan speakers live in Mordovia, a province located 500 km to the south-east of Moscow. It must nevertheless be noted that on the whole only one third of Mordvins live in Mordovia and that Mordvins are one of the most

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scattered "Nationalities" of the Russian Federation. For that matter the languages are rightly classified as vulnerable and the census of 2002 revealed that Mordvins still amount to the third Uralic group in Eurasia, next to Hungarian and Fenno-Baltic, which might be interpreted as a strength, but they have now fallen below the symbolic limit of one million people. In theory Erzya and Moksha are official languages in Mordovia but in practice they are in a rather classic situation of unequal diglossia with Russian, which is the official and majoritary language of the whole Russian Federation. The number of everyday active speakers of Moksha may reach about 200 000. There exists about no recent socio-linguistic data about the exact number of speakers and their level of competence in the language, so that the exact situation is difficult to assess. On-the-spot research is also rather uneasy to carry out.

Mordovia is located in western Russia on the southern bank of the Volga:

Map1: Location of Mordovia   **Map2**: Mokshan dialects in Mordovia Province

In the 19th century Mordvins were also living in towns like Saratov, Penza ['its end' in Moksha], etc. and on the eastern bank of the Volga River. These communities have now disappeared for the most part, but the oldest attestations of the language may in fact have been drawn from them instead of speakers located in Mordovia. Map2 indicates the main dialects of the Moksha language within Mordovia. There is about no information on the dialects spoken outside the limits of the Province.

3. HISTORICAL SKETCH

Recent dates for the politico-linguistic history of the Mordvin population are :

- 1928: creation of a *Mordvin National District*, centered around Saransk, the present-day capital of Mordovia Province,
- January 10, 1930: creation of a *Mordvin autonomous Region*,
- December 20, 1934: *Mordvin autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic*[2],
- 1938: Two writing systems and literary norms are created for Moksha and Erzya,
- December 07, 1990: New name *Mordvin Soviet Socialist Republic*,
- January 25, 1994: The name is changed into *Mordvin Republic*,
- September 21, 1995: A new constitution is voted.

The writing system that became official for Moksha is as normative as descriptive. In practice Mordvin has numerous dialectal and subdialectal varieties, which are subsumed rather than described by the rough dichotomy between Moksha and Erzya[3]. It is not possible, and it was not possible either in 1938, to create a graphic norm that would account for all dialectal varieties. A choice was inevitable. In theory Literary Moksha is based on the "central" dialect: "Кучкастоннесь - мокшень сёрмадома кяльть базац и юроц. [The central dialect is the source and base of the Mokshan literary language.]" (Aliamkin 2000:6). Raun (1988) indicates that the districts of Krasnoslobodsk and Temnikov, that is to say the Northern dialect, provided the dialectal basis for the literary norm in 1938. This piece of historical information can also be found in Keresztes (1999). Quite confusingly the same area is called either central and northern by the same sources. It can also be noted that the "central" dialect of Mokshan is central from the Mordvin point of view rather than from the Mokshan one. As a rule the isoglosses and labels of the dialects that can be found in sources are not infrequently hard to grasp and confirm[4].

Because Erzyans are about twice as numerous as Mokshans and are also traditionnally more active culturally the Mokshan literary language is to a large extent an adaptation of the Erzyan norm with all the morphological readjustments needed to account for the Northern dialect of Moksha. For that matter Literary Moksha is a kind of hybrid language, which has the morphology of the Northern dialect and the partly Erzyanized phonetics of the Central

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[2] The name *Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of Mokshans and Erzyans* was proposed but rejected.
[3] See Fournet (2010:21).
[4] See Fournet (2010:34-39) and (2011).

dialect. Before the promulgation of the literary norm, several persons, Russian missionaries for the most part, had created their own writing systems: Barsov (1893) [representative of the South-eastern dialect], Tiumenev (1879) [unknown dialectal basis[5]] and Ornatov (1838) [representative of a South-western dialect: Tambov Zubu]. These systems designed to translate (parts of) the Bible do not contain an explicit grammatical theory but are interesting testimonies of past dialects.

The word *moksha* is first attested in the 13th century. At the time of the Pax Mongolica an emissary of the French king Saint-Louis, known as Guillaume de Roubrouk (or Wilhelm van Ruysbroek), mentioned the existence of a river or people called *Moxel*. The traditional interpretation is that *Moxel* stands for either *Moksha-lej* 'Moksha River' or *Moksh-ale* 'Mokshan man'. All sources agree on the conclusion that this is the first historical attestation of Mokshans in a way or another. The narration of Roubrouk's travels, written in Latin and translated in Middle-English was published in London in 1298.

Concrete linguistic materials were first published by Witsen (1692 & 1705). This document is both the oldest and largest source on Mordvin, and more precisely on the Eastern Zubu dialect of Moksha. Witsen was in Russia in 1666-7 and collected more than 300 words and phrases. A thorough analysis and translation of Witsen into French exists in Fournet (2008) and Fournet (2010:71-77; 377-399). Witsen is extremely valuable for its lexical data but grammatical information is scarce and indirect. Strahlenberg (1757:314-322) is another meager source of a dozen words of an unknown dialect with contradictory features[6]. Pallas (1788, IV:77) contains another list of basic words collected in 1768[7]. Pallas attributes the list to a dialect of "Mordouans près de la Volga" [Mordvins near the Volga], which is as fuzzy as can be. The features point at an Eastern dialect of Moksha as discussed in Fournet (2010:300-301).

The first work on Moksha which is authentically and consciously designed to describe the language in a "modern" linguistic way is Ahlquist (1861). This is the oldest description from a phonetic, grammatical and lexical point of view. It deals with the Northern dialect. It is not entirely free from some mistakes but on the whole it appears reliable and representative[8]. As a matter of fact one wishes it would be even more complete than it is. This is the work that will be examined in the following paragraphs.

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[5] It is unclear whether this translation published in Kazan still exists. It was used as a source in Paasonen (1903).
[6] Cf. Fournet (2010:78; 373-376).
[7] Cf. Fournet (2010:367-371).
[8] Cf. Fournet (2010:286-292).

4. THE CONCEPT OF LEXICAL CLASSES

Before we proceed to a description and critical analysis of Parts of Speech in Moksha we need to look at the notion and history of that concept. A synthesis of the issues and criteria raised by Parts of Speech can be found in Van Valin's *Introduction to Syntax*:

> "Nouns, verbs and prepositions are traditionally referred to as 'parts of speech' or 'word classes'; in contemporary linguistics they are termed **lexical categories**. The most important lexical categories are noun, verb, **adjective**, **adverb** and **adposition**, which subsumes prepositions and **postpositions**. In **traditional grammar**, lexical categories are given **notional definitions**, i.e. they are characterized in terms of their semantic content. For example, *noun* is defined as 'the name of a person, place or thing', *verb* is defined as an 'action word', and *adjective* is defined as 'a word expressing a property or attribute'. In modern linguistics, however, they are defined morphosyntactically in terms of their grammatical properties." Van Valin (2004:6)

The oft criticized and nevertheless unavoidable concept of Parts of Speech (μέρη τοῦ λόγου) can be ultimately traced to Ancient Greece. One of the first grammatical treatises, the *Art of Grammar* (Τέχνη Γραμματική), was written by *Dionysius Thrax* (Διονύσιος ὁ Θρᾷξ) (170-90 BCE) in the 2nd century BC and distinguished between eight categories, established on a mix of formal and semantic criteria: "[§. ια] τοῦ δὲ λόγου μέρη ἐστὶν ὀκτώ· ὄνομα, ῥῆμα, μετοχή, ἄρθρον, ἀντωνυμία, πρόθεσις, ἐπίρρημα, σύνδεσμος." [There are eight Parts of Speech: noun, verb, participle, article, pronoun, preposition, adverb, conjunction]. One verse in Homer's Illiad exemplifies each of them: "[Book 22: 59] πρὸς δ᾽ ἐμὲ τὸν δύστηνον ἔτι φρονέοντ᾽ ἐλέησον" [And for me, the still sensible old man, (please) feel compassion]: πρὸς preposition, δ[ε] conjunction, ἐμὲ pronoun, τὸν article, δύστηνον noun, ἔτι adverb, φρονέοντ[ov] participle, ἐλέησον verb.

Because Latin does not have a definite article contrary to Greek the classes had to be adjusted: (1) *noun*: inflected for case, person or number, and signifying a concrete or abstract entity, (2) *pronoun*: substitutable for a noun and sharing its formal variations, (3) *verb*: without case inflection, but inflected for tense, person or number, and signifying an activity or process performed or undergone, (4) *participle*: sharing features with verbs and nouns, (5) *preposition*: placed before other words (nouns and verbs) in compounds or in syntagms, (6) *interjection*: used alone and expressing emotion, (7) *adverb*: invariable and used in modification of a verb, (8) *conjunction*: binding together phrases and sentences.

In all cases it can be noted that Adjectives were not considered a separate class by the Ancient Greek and Latin grammarians, as they follow nominal declensions and are quite often nominalized.

5. INTRODUCTION TO THE DESCRIPTION OF MOKSHA BY AHLQUIST (1861)

The book written in German by Ahlquist was published in 1861 and comprises five sections: (1) an introduction, a so-called "Grammatik" with (2) a phonetic subsection (Lautlehre) and (3) a morphological subsection (Formenlehre), (4) Texts and (5) glossaries: Moksha-German, German-Moksha. The book is entirely written using the Latin alphabet and does not refer explicitly to any Cyrillic source. There are nevertheless some indications that Cyrillic sources were used in the making of the book: for example *eräi* 'inhabitant' (p.12) is an erroneous transliteration of эряй, which must be read [erjaj], instead of **[erɛj], which is unheardof in Mordvin[9]. The letter <я> is used to write [ɛ] and [ja], a frequently uncomfortable and misleading situation. Karl August Engelbrekt Ahlquist (1826-1889) was a Finnish linguist at the University of Helsingfors. Most of his works are in Finnish but some of them, mostly the descriptions of Uralic languages, are written in German. In spite of his seemingly Swedish name he seems to have never written anything in the Swedish language.

Ahlquist's framework is implicit and has to be deduced from the internal structure of the subsection devoted to "morphology", which mixes word-formation, word-derivation, paradigms of declensions and conjugation. It can also be observed that there is no section dedicated to syntax and types of sentences. Ahlquist very frequently compares Moksha to his own native language: Finnish, which acts as a kind of implicit framework or background. Incidentally it can be noted the nonexisting phonetics **eräi 'inhabitant' for *erjaj < erja-* 'to live' may have been tainted by Finnish *elä-* 'to live'.

The structure of the "morphological" subsection is:

- I. Das Nomen [nominal forms]

    A. Das Substantiv (pp. 12-25) [Nouns and declensions]

    B. Das Adjectiv (pp. 25-27) [Adjectives]

    C. Das Zahlword (pp. 27-31) [Numbers]

    D. Das Pronomen (pp. 31-40) [Pronouns]

- II. Das Verbum [verbal forms]

    1. Bildung des Verbums (pp. 40-45) [verb derivational formatives]

    2. Flexion des Verbums (pp. 45-88) [conjugations]

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[9] Ahlquist (1861:152) actually gives the correct form in the Moksha-German Glossary.

- III. Partikeln [particles]

    Postpositionen (pp. 88-91) [so-called Postpositions]

    Adverbien (pp. 91-92) [so-called Adverbs]

    Conju[n]ctionen[10] (p. 92) [Conjunctions]

    Interjectionen (p. 92-93) [Interjections]

This implicit classification is extremely classical and directly reflects the Parts of Speech of the Greek and Latin traditions. The classes listed by Ahlquist number nine, with the addition of Adjectives and Numbers, the removal of Participles and the replacement of Prepositions by Postpositions. We will examine how Ahlquist dealt with the lexical and grammatical reality of Moksha within that mold.

6. THE MAIN MORPHOLOGICAL FEATURES OF MOKSHA

As mentioned before Moksha is a Uralic language and belongs to the Volgaic branch of that genetic family. As many languages spoken in northern Eurasia it displays the areal and typological feature of being agglutinative and more precisely suffixal. It must be noted that Moksha nevertheless has at least one morpheme that functions as a clear prefix: the negative morpheme <аф> [af] as in <афсатыкс> [afsatɨks] 'insufficiency' based on the stem <сат-> [sat] 'to suffice, to be enough'. Another potential example is инь 'most': оцю 'big' > инь оцю 'biggest'. This latter word is more debatable as it could also be considered an adverb rather than a prefix. On the whole Moksha's lexical material can be assigned to the following categories according to their behavior as regards suffixation:

- suffixable items: Nouns, Numerals, Adjectives, Verbs,
- Pronouns are a rather polymorphic class, which behave either as suffixes, attached to suffixable items, or as (nominal-looking) stems,
- unsuffixable items: Conjunctions, Interjections, Adverbs,
- items only or mostly used as suffixes: Postpositions.

In addition to these main classes a number of words are very hard to classify in any category and will be exemplified below (§9). There is no grammatical gender in Moksha for

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[10] Mispelled in the book.

nouns, pronouns or any class, but some nouns refer to male or female living beings: але 'man, father', бык 'bull' as compared with ава 'woman', тракс 'cow'. Plural is either compulsorily opposed to Singular, in a number of nominal, verbal and pronominal suffixes, or the form is syncretic for both. Moksha is usually described as having cases, but it is not clear what a case is in Moksha as will appear below. There is no kind of agreement, in number or case for Adjectives, which remain invariable in that respect. Finite verbal forms have a distinction between tenses and moods. They usually distinguish Plural and Persons but a number of forms are syncretic so that the attested suffixes are in lower numbers than what could be expected from a complete combination of tenses, moods, Plural and Persons.

Moksha clearly has a verbo-nominal distinction: куд [kud] 'house' is typically a noun while эря [ɛrja] 'to be alive, to live (in a place)' is a verb. The reasons to posit this distinction are that a noun like куд [kud] 'house' can be suffixed by:

- the Plural marker -т [t]: кудт [kut:] 'houses (Nom. Pl)', while эрят [ɛrjat] means 'you (Sg.) live'. Cf. Ahlquist (1861:17) who indicates "zwei Numeri" [two Numbers] in Moksha.

- the Definite Article (Sg) -сь [s], (Pl) -не [ne]: кудсь [kuts] 'the house (Nom. Sg)', кудтне [kut:ne] 'the houses (Nom. Pl)'. In comparison эрясь [ɛrjas] means '(s)he lived' while *эрятне is impossible. The Article is also suffixed to Person names: Ванясь [vanjas] 'Ivan (Nom.)'. This latter feature does not seem to be described in Ahlquist (1861).

- the Possessive Pronominal suffixes: кудозе [kudəze] 'my house (Nom. Sg)', кудце [kudət:se] 'your (thy) house (Nom. Sg)', кудоц [kudəts] 'his, her house (Nom. Sg)', кудоньке [kudəŋke] 'our house(s) (Nom.)', кудонте [kudənte] 'your house(s) (Nom.)', кудсна [kutsna] 'their house(s) (Nom.)'. None of these suffixes can be suffixed to any stem but a nominal one. These forms can be reinforced by Pronouns: монь кудозе [mojn kudəze] 'my house (Nom. Sg) of me (Gen. Acc)'. Note that **монь куд is impossible and that any time a noun is determined by another noun the Possessive suffixes are compulsory. Cf. Ahlquist (1861:32-34).

- Case-markers: -нь [n] 'Gen.-Acc.', -ти/(н)ди [ti/(n)di] 'Dat.': мокшатнень кудсна [mokʃətnen kut:sna] 'the(ir) houses (Nom. Pl.) of the Mokshan people (Gen. Pl)', мокшатнень кудснонди [mokʃətnen kut:snəndi] 'for/to the(ir) houses (Dat. Pl.) of the Mokshan people (Gen. Pl)', мокшатненди [mokʃətnendi] 'for/to the Mokshan people (Dat. Pl)'. But note that мокшать кудоц [mokʃət kudəts] means 'the house (Nom. Sg)

of the Mokshan person' while мокшень[11] кудсь [mokʃən kuts] means 'the Mokshan house (Nom. Sg)'. This suffix -нь is also used to derive Adjectives from Nominal stems. This feature is quite inadequately described in Ahlquist (1861:17): "Moskuvi̯n" cannot be the Genitive of Moscow[12] but is an Adjective: 'Moscovite'.

On the whole the combination of Articles, Plural, Pronominal and Case markers is fairly complex and generates a high number of suffixal aggregates. Some forms like мокша-т-не-нь are transparently analytical: Stem + Plural + Article + Gen.-Acc but this is far from being always the case. In addition the order and the nature of the segments involved in suffixal aggregates is not always the same: куд-оз-ти [kudəsti] [stem-Possessive-Case] 'for/to my house' but куд-со-н [kutsən] [stem-Case-Possessive] 'in my house'. It can also be noted that the same meaning has more than one segmental expression: 'my' is -оз- in куд-оз-ти but -н in куд-со-н. It is therefore adequate to state that Moksha (and Erzya as well) is to some extent as flexional as it is agglutinative, somewhat in the same way as Estonian. In all cases Mordvin is much less segmentally transparent than Turkic or Altaic languages usually are. It can be added that the suffixal aggregates attached to verb stems display the same kind of features. There is no biunivocal relationship between a given suffix and a given meaning or function. Suffixes, in the sense of phonetic segments, usually have more than one meaning or function, and reciprocally a given meaning or function often has more than one segmental expression. Suffixal paradigms most often contain forms that are not predictable on a synchronic basis, which is another way of stating that Moksha has flexional features. To put it otherwise bound forms are not infrequently difficult to segment into morphemes. Allomorphy and polyvalence are widespread.

A verb like эря [ɛrja] 'to be alive, to live (in a place)' is a verb can be suffixed by:

- Tense markers like -ма 'Infinitive': эряма 'to live', -сь '(s)he + Preterit': эрясь '(s)he lived', -(о)ль 'Durative Past': эряль '(s)he was living'.
- Pronominal suffixes: эрян 'I live', эрят 'you live', эряй '(s)he lives', эрятама 'we live', эрятада 'you(all) live', эряйхть [ɛrja(j)çt] 'they live'. It must nevertheless be noted that some of these suffixes can be suffixed to nouns or adjectives: мокшан 'I am Moksha', with a predicative meaning without copula. Similarly мокша-т, -тама, -тада

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[11] The reason for this spelling is that Cyrillic does not accept <шо>.
[12] The Gen.-Acc. of *Mosku*, as cited by Ahlquist (1861:17) should be [unattested] *Moskut*.

exist but not **мокшай or **мокшайхть which are impossible. Directly (сонь) мокша '(s)he is Moksha' and (синь) мокшат 'they are Mokshas' are possible.

In addition to nouns and verbs Moksha has a class of Adjectives, whose main feature is that they do not display any kind of agreement, in number or case: ине 'big', ёмла 'small', акша 'white', etc. For example ине куд '(a) big house', ине кудт 'big houses', ине кудса 'in (the) big house(s)' [syncretic form], etc. Adjectives are seldom nominalized in Moksha although that class transfer is not impossible: акша as a noun means 'money'. Adjectives are mainly suffixable by:

- the Pronominal suffixes: -н, -т, -тама, -тада and the tense mark -ль 'Durative Past'. This feature is shared with Verbs.
- the suffix -ста, which normally corresponds to the so-called "Elative" case and forms what functions as Adverbs: цебярь [tsebɛr] 'good' > цебярьста [tsebɛrsta] 'well'.

Aliamkin (2000:94-102): "числительнай"[13] and Ahlquist (1861:27-31): "Zahlwort" also distinguish a separate class of Numbers or Numerals. Apart from semantic issues these words function like a subclass of Adjectives that can easily be transfered to the class of Nouns: фкя куд [fkɛ kud] 'one house', колма кудт [kolma kut:] 'three houses', колмоце кудсь [kolməts kuts] 'the third house' follow the pattern of ordinary Adjectives, but колмоцесь [kołmətses] 'the third (one)' that of Nouns. The reasons to posit a class of Numerals are in my opinion more their semantics rather than purely grammatical or morphological features.

7. CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE LEXICAL CLASSES IN AHLQUIST (1861) AND ALIAMKIN (2000)

On the whole Moksha has a clear verbo-nominal distinction because some suffixes are specifically attached to a given lexical class but at the same time it must be noted that some suffixes are freely compatible with a large variety of bases. For example the suffix of 'Second (or Durative) Past' can be added to nearly everything, including nominal stems bearing case-marks and pronouns: куд 'house' > кудса (case-mark -ca 'in') 'in (a) house' > кудсонза (Pronoun -нза P3Sg) 'in her/his house' > кудсонзоль (Durative Past) '(s)he was at home' >

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[13] A superficial mokshanification of Russian числительное. A truly Mokshan word like лувксвал is possible.

кудсонзолеме (Pronoun -еме P1Pl) 'we were at her/his home'. It is therefore somewhat misleading to define a set of *declinable* words, which include Nouns, Numerals and Pronouns, as opposed to *conjugatable* words, which include Verbs, as opposed to *invariable* words, which include Adjectives, as in Aliamkin (2000:32). To start with this characterization would require to define what the labels: 'declinable' (склоняндави), 'conjugatable' (спрягандави) and 'invariable' (аф полафневи) really mean in a language like Moksha, which has such a considerable fluidity and polyvalency of its suffixal material. This issue is not addressed either in Ahlquist (1861) who tends to apply implicit and undefined criteria.

Quite surprisingly neither Ahlquist (1861) nor Aliamkin (2000) consider that Moksha has Participles as a separate class of words while it is quite obvious that it does. Such a form as эряй [ɛrjaj] can be: a verb in (сон) ошу эряй '(s)he lives in a town', a noun in ошу аш эряй 'there is no inhabitant in (the) town', a participle in ошу эряй ава '(a) city-dwelling woman'. The nature of эряй is also indicated by the fact it takes the Nominal Plural -(х)т(ь): эряйхть '(1) they live; (2) inhabitants'. Note that 'future' translates сай пинге [saj piŋgɛ] '(the) coming time', with ca- [sa] 'to come'.

The thorniest issues about lexical classes in Moksha do not lie in the major classes like Nouns, Adjectives and Verbs, even though Numerals are a somewhat debatable class, which could also be dealt with as a subset of Adjectives with semantic peculiarities and a free potential to be used as Nouns. They do not lie either in clear and somewhat marginal classes like Conjunctions and Interjections, which have nearly no suffixal or syntactical interaction with other classes. They lie in the huge quagmire of lexical material, where pronoms, noms and case-marks combine. For example it can be noted that most "adverbs" listed in Ahlquist (1861:92-93) are Pronouns suffixed by so-called case-marks. In many cases the stems are still attested in Moksha itself:

- *kosa* '(in) where', *kosta* 'where from', *ko(v)* 'where to', etc. Cf. Moksha *kona* 'Relative Pronoun' < Uralic **kv-* 'who?, which?',
- *tjasa* '(in) here', *tjasta* 'from here', etc. Cf. Moksha *tja*, *tä* < Uralic **tv* 'this',
- *esa* '(in) there', *esta* 'from there'. This element is no longer attested in Moksha as a free form (contrary to Erzya) but see Uralic **e/i* 'that',
- *tosa* '(in) overthere', *tosta* 'from overthere' (< Uralic **tv* 'this'), etc.

Some items are nevertheless clearly Adverbs: *vandĭ* ванды 'tomorrow', *ańtsak* аньцек 'only' (from Chuvash), *päk* пяк 'very' (from Turkic). These items cannot be derived from any

native Mokshan stems. Some others are in the gray zone between motivation and fossilization like for example: *täni* тяни 'now', which represents a temporal form of the deictic word *tja*, *tä*. This suffix is still alive in Moksha: *kiza* 'year' > *kiza-nɛ* 'this year'. The item тяни literally means 'at this moment = now'. Another example of partial motivation is *ombı̯t* омботь 'the day after tomorrow' which has a relationship with омбоце 'second'. In other words a number of Mokshan items listed in Ahlquist (1861) are possibly listed as adverbs because they translate into adverbs but from the Mokshan point of view they are particular forms of Pronouns, and not independent words. Neither are they derivatives, many of them belong to regular and productive paradigms of forms.

Another general problem is the issue of Cases and Postpositions in Moksha. The cause of descriptive difficulties is that there is no clearcut difference between a compound of two nouns and what is usually considered to be a "case" or a postposition:

- куд 'house' with пря 'head' > кудбря [kudbrɛa] 'roof'. A compound.
- куд 'house' with инкса 'because of' > куд инкса [kud-iŋksa] 'because of house(s)'. This is supposed to be a Postpositional construction.
- куд 'house' with -ca 'in' > кудса [kutsa] 'inside house(s), at home'. This is supposed to be a case-mark construction.

A Postposition like инкса cannot be used outside these constructions, neither can -ca which is not even considered a word entry in dictionaries contrary to инкса. One difference between инкса and -ca is that the Definite Article can be inserted: кудть инкса [kut:-iŋksa] 'because of the house', кудтнень инкса [kut:nen-iŋksa] 'because of the houses'. This is not possible in the case of кудса [kutsa] which is syncretic as regards Number and Definiteness. Another point is the behavior of Possessive Pronouns: кудозень инкса [kudəzen-iŋksa] 'because of my house', куднень инкса [kudnen-iŋksa] 'because of my houses' as compared with кудсан [kutsan] 'in my house(s)' which is syncretic. Case-marks and Postpositions therefore differ as regards syncretism and inseparable cliticity. Based on these morphological criteria Moksha has the following Cases:

- Grammatical Cases: Nom. (unmarked), Vocative (й)[14], Gen.-Acc.[15] (нь), Dative ((н)ди, ти),
- Local Cases: Ablative (да 'from, of'), Elative (ста[16] 'out of'), Inessive (са 'in'), Illative (с 'into'), Lative[17] (у, и 'on, to(ward)'), Prolative (га, ва) 'near, along',
- Miscellaneous Cases: Comparative (шка 'as, like'), Caritive (фтома 'without').

Bearing testimony to the difficulty of determining what a case really is in Moksha Aliamkin (2000:48) adds a "Causative" marked by инкса 'because of'. There is no objective reason to accept that item as a "case" as shown before.

As regards Postpositions such a word as инкса 'because of' is a bound form that must follow a (pro)noun or a nominal form. Most items functioning as Postpositions and listed in Ahlquist (1861:88-91) are fundamentally Nouns: for example фтал *noun* 'back(side), rear', when suffixed by case-marks, can be used as: фтала *adverb* 'behind' or (кудть) фтала *postp.* 'behind (the house)'. Note that фтал takes a particular Locative case-mark *a* when used as a Postposition. The word пря 'head' seen before can also be used as a Postposition: кудть пряв 'over the house', кудозень пряста 'from the top of my house'. For that matter Postpositions are an open class. It is also possible from a diachronic point of view that present-day case-marks used to be independent nouns that have evolved toward the pure status of bound suffixes.

Another peculiarity of Moksha is that items that are already suffixed by case-marks can be resuffixed by new case-marks: куд 'house' > кудфтома 'without house(s)' > кудфтомось 'the one without house(s)'. This is called second declension in Aliamkin (2000:72-73). That feature is not described in Ahlquist (1861). It can be noted that this possibility draws a line between the grammatical cases (Nom., Voc., Gen-Acc, Dat.) and the other cases: only the formers can be suffixed to the latters. This tends to show that only the grammatical cases are truly cases in Moksha. In that respect it can also be noted that Adjectives can be derived from the non grammatical cases: кудфтома 'without house(s)' > кудфтомонь 'homeless'. This is another indication that these case-marks have implicit nominal features.

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[14] This Case is not described in Ahlquist (1861) and considered a pseudo-case form in Aliamkin (2000:73-74). For example ялга [jałga] 'friend' > ялгай [jałgaj] '(my) friend !'.

[15] The westernmost dialect of Moksha makes a difference between these two cases in Pronouns.

[16] Quite certainly to be analyzed -с-да 'from inside'.

[17] This Case is not described in Ahlquist (1861).

8. THE ISSUES PERTAINING TO NEGATIVE MORPHEMES IN MOKSHA

Another feature of Moksha is that negation, especially verbal negation, is expressed by several morphemes according to tenses and moods. In addition these items can be suffixed by the same pronominal suffixes as verbs, thus leading to the apparent conclusion that these Negative morphemes are formally conjugated as verbs. Ahlquist (1861) deals with these "forms" or *Gestalte* in the same section as Verbs. Ahlquist (1861:50-52) does not seem to know whether Mokshan forms should be best dealt with as a separate conjugation, a separate form or a separate lexical class.

In Moksha the Indicative mood has three tenses: Present, Past and Durative Past. They are respectively called Present (тяниень пингсь), First Past (васенце ётай пингсь), Second Past (омбоце ётай пингсь) in Aliamkin (2000:127) and Zaicz (1998:198)[18]. To these tenses can be added a periphrastic Future[19]. The negation of the Indicative tenses is /af/[20] <аф> and it usually appears right before the verb. Paradigms will be illustrated with the verb /jaka/ <яка> 'to walk':

- Moksha: /jakan/ <якан> 'I walk, am walking' => /af jakan/ <аф якан>
- Moksha: /jakajn/ <якань> 'I walked' => /aʃən jaka/ <ашень яка>

Some authors cite other possibilities for the negation. Ahlquist (1861:50-51) has forms like *ašin jaka* 'I do not walk' with /aʃ/ <аш> 'there is not' for Present tense. One problem is that this cannot be found in any present-day handbook or dictionary of Moksha. For that matter its existence seems dubious in the first place or maybe this form was at the very best a dialectal and obsolescent feature of the northern Mokshan dialect surveyed by Ahlquist in the

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[18] Zaicz (1998) is in fact a description of Erzya, even though it is misleadingly titled "Mordva". In spite of this intrinsic limitation, features assigned to Erzya are often acceptable for Moksha as well, even if they cannot be deduced from the actual contents of Zaicz's article and need cross-references. It can be noted that Ahlquist (1861) does not mention the Continuous Past, which once again tends to show that this first and oldest description of Moksha cannot be fully trusted. Zaicz (1998:200) also claims that the Continuous Past does not exist in Moksha: "The second past tense, which is lacking in Moksha, refers to events in the past, which either lasted long or habitually recurred."

[19] As in many languages, Present can be used to express future actions. Cf. Ahlquist (1861:45): "das Präsens [vertritt] in dieser Mundart auch das Futurum" or Zaicz (1998:199): "The present tense could more properly be termed a non past, as it often refers to the future." This is called the Simple Future (простой сай пингсь) in Aliamkin (2000:128). The periphrastic Future is called Compound Future (сложнай сай пингсь). It is unclear to which extent this periphrastic Future is really a native feature of Moksha or if it is an equivalent of the Russian future *будеть* + *Verb*. Periphrastic constructions with other verbs can also convey a semantic Future load, such as *arsems* 'to think of, to plan to'.

[20] The transcription used in this article is phonemic and therefore does not indicate the palatalization of consonants in contact with front vowels, especially in the south-eastern idiolects: /jakalen/=[jakal'en'].

middle of the 19th century[21]. Rédei (1988:68) lists all negative segments attested in Uralic languages and mentions /aʃ-/ only for Past tense. Another possibility which appears only for Past is /iz/ or /ɨz/[22] <изь>. This is described in Aliamkin (2000:148) and in the Mokshan-Russian dictionary edited by Serebrennikov (1998:202): /izen jaka/ <изень яка> 'я не ходил' [I did not walk, go there]. Another (shorter) dictionary: Herrala-Feoktistov (1998) does not list this unit at all.

The Erzyan equivalents of the above Mokshan negative sentences are according to Zaicz (1998:198):

- Erzya: /kundan/ <кундан> 'I catch, am catching' => /a kundan/ <а кундан>
- Erzya: /kundin/ <кундинь> 'I caught' => /ez-in kunda/ <эзинь кунда>

Erzya still has a short negative segment /a/ for which there is no equivalent in modern Moksha. In Witsen (1692) there may be an instance of this short negation /a/ in <amidu> glossed in Dutch <leeft> 'alive'. This can analyzed as a negative past participle 'un-die-d' = 'a-mid-u'. Another instance is <ayrista> glossed <zyn nuchteren> 'to be sober', which may stand for <a-ired-sta> 'undrunken'. The *Mordvinen* of Witsen (1692) are well-known to be Mokshans. It seems that Moksha lost the short /a/ at a rather recent time and now only has /af/. The Compound Future is built with the verb, acting as auxiliary, /karma/ <карма> 'to begin' in Present together with one of the so-called Infinitive forms /jakama/[23]: /karma-n jakama/ <карман якама> 'I'll walk' => /af karma-n jakama/ <аф карман якама>. The Continuous Past is more complex and two ways of expressing negation exist for this tense:

- Moksha /jakalen/ <якалень> 'I was walking' => /af jakalen/ <аф якалень>
- Moksha /jakalen/ <якалень> 'I was walking' => /afəlen jaka/ <афолень яка>

The suffixes of the Continuous Past /(ə)l/ and of P1sg /(e)n/ can be added either to the verb /jaka/ or to the negative segment /af/. The second possibility appears to be statistically the most frequent. The negation of the Imperative is not /af/ <аф> but /tja/ <тя>: /jakak/

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[21] I tend to think that it is erroneous for the Present tense. Paasonen (1903:22) cites a Mokshan form: <ašən' p'el^Lt'> 'I was not afraid' and Aliamkin (2000:148) indeed indicates that /aʃ/ can be used as a synonym of /iz/ for negative Past verbal forms but cites only examples in the Medio-Potential voice.
[22] Written <ez> in Ahlquist (1868:50-51) or <ez, əz> in Paasonen (1903:22). None of these authors has a stable and coherent notation of the phoneme /ɨ/.
[23] *Cf.* Zaicz (1998:199) for a similar construction in Erzya.

<якак> 'walk!' => /tjat jaka/ <тят яка> 'don't walk (Sg)'[24]; /jakada/ <якада> 'walk!' => /tjada jaka/ <тяда яка> 'don't walk (Pl)'. This negative segment is also used for the Optative, expressed by the segment -*za*-: /ulezan/ <улезан> 'May I be!' => /tjazan ule/ 'May I not be!'. Note that the segments -*za*- Optative and -*n* P1sg are suffixed to the negative segment *tja*. The semantic features of the Imperative, which expresses order or interdiction, and those of the Optative, which expresses hope or fear, probably account for the same negation being used for both. That the Indicative and the Imperative differ as regards negation is not at all rare in Uralic: Finnish *mene-t* 'you (Sg) go' => *e-t mene* 'you (Sg) don't go' but *älä mene!* 'don't go!'; Hungarian *mész* 'you (Sg) go' => *nem mész* 'you (Sg) don't go' but *ne menj!* 'don't go!'; Vogul Sosva *śalte-n* 'you (Sg) enter' => *at śalte-n* 'you (Sg) don't enter' but *ul śalte-n!* 'don't enter!'. The complete set of negative segments is described in the following table:

	Predicative	Non-Predicative
Indicative Present	af Verb-Ø-[PP][25]	af Verb-(e)z-#
Indicative Past	iz/aš-[PP] Verb-Ø-#	aš-ez Verb-Ø-#
Indicative Durative Past	af-əl-[PP] Verb-Ø-#	(?)
Subjunctive	af-əl-[PP] Verb-Ø-#	/
Imperative	tja-Ø-[PP] Verb-Ø-#	/
Optative	tja-za-[PP] Verb-Ø-#	/
Participle Present	apak Verb-j-#	apak/af (?) Verb-da-#
Participe Past	apak Verb-k-#	apak (?) Verb-jn-#

Synoptic Table of Negative segments in Moksha (Active voice)

It can be noted that similar suffixation of the pronouns to the negative segment instead of the verb exists in Finnish: *kävele-n* 'I walk' => *e-n kävele* 'I do not walk', but not in Hungarian *gyalogolom* => *nem gyalogolom*. This is not infrequently described as Finnish having a "negative verb". Moksha goes one step farther than Finnish as the Past tense marker cannot be suffixed to the negative segment in Finnish, contrary to what happens in Moksha: *ot-a-n* 'I take' => *e-n ota* and *ot-i-n* 'I took' => *e-n otta-nut*. In Finnish *e-n* 'I not' is in fact tense insensitive. From a formal point of view the pronominal suffixes are moved from the verb to the negative segment *e-*. It can be noted that contemporary dictionaries of Moksha deal with /af/ as a particle (частица), not a verb. Zaicz (1998:199) nevertheless considers this

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[24] /tjak/ also exists. P2sg is very often expressed with -*k* and not -*t* in Erzya and Moksha.
[25] PP stands for the "Personal Pronoun suffixes", -# indicates that no PP can be suffixed to the form.

particle to be a verb: "this particle probably descends from the base of the pFU [Proto-Finno-Ugric] negative verb *e- ~ *ä- (with metaphony *e/ä > *a in *e-wole >> *avoľ* 'isn't')."[26] Rédei refuses to posit a negative verb at the Proto-Uralic stage:

> "[P]U *e* war ursprünglich - weil einsilbig - sicher kein Begriffswort, d. h. kein Verb für 'nicht sein', sondern eine Verneinungspartikel, die später zu einem Verb wurde, d. h. sie nahm die Endungen des Grundsverbs auf: Ableitungssuffixe (vgl. *elä*, *älä*), Zeichen und Konjugationsendungen."[27] Rédei (1988:69)

But it can be noted that this word having only one syllable is actually not a conclusive reason to think it was not a verb. Moksha does have monosyllabic verbs: ca [sa] 'to come' or ту [tu] 'to go'.

As shown in the above table Mokša presents a highly differentiated system of negative segments: *af*, *iz*, *aš*, *tja*, *apak*, to which *a* (archaic) and **ilja* (attested in Erzya) could be added to account for the situation in Proto-Mordvin. The segments can be suffixed by pronominal suffixes and even tense suffixes. Does it really mean that they should be considered to be of verbal nature, and incidentally how many verbs does this mean? What is the most revealing criterion? From a semantic point of view Negation is insensitive to Person, Number, Tense or Mood. But from a formal point of view the Negative morphemes throughout Uralic and in Moksha in particular can be suffixed by these very same suffixes that usually characterize Verbs. This is in my opinion just a formal contingency and these segments should preferably not considered verbs but just adverbs.

9. SOME UNCLASSIFIABLE WORDS IN MOKSHA

Apart from the negative morphemes Moksha has a number of items which are difficult to assign to a particular class:

- дяль /dɛl/: штоба фкявок маци дяль кунда 'so that /štobə/ no /fkɛvək/ goose /matsi/ be /dɛl/ captured /kunda/' (Aliamkin 2000:133).
- дямаль /dɛmal/ 'it should not, it must not': дямаль корхта /dɛmal kořta/ 'It should not be spoken about' (Serebrennikov-et-al 1998:171).

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[26] Erzya *avoľ* 'is not' should be confused with Moksha *afəl* 'was not'. *Avolj* < *aw 'not' + (w)ole 'to be' but *afəl* < *apa* 'not' + *əl* 'Continuous Past'.

[27] "Proto-Uralic *e* was originally - for it was monosyllabic - certainly not a semantic word, i.e. not a verb for 'to be not', but a negative particle, which later on became a verb, i.e. took the endings of true verbs: derivational suffixes (cf. *elä*, *älä*), marks and conjugation endings."

These units are reminiscent of English "modals". It can be noted that the verb is bare and does not have any infinitive suffix, nor any suffix of any kind. The voiced initial indicates that these words are probably borrowings. The morphological alternation between /dɛmal/ and /dɛl/ looks Turkic: cf. Turkic *-ma- 'not'. The final consonant -ль represents Moksha's Subjunctive mood if the analysis in Aliamkin (2000:133) is accepted. Serebrennikov-et-al (1998:171) considers дямаль to be a kind of particle and does not list дяль. These items could be considered verbs with a massively defective paradigm.

A verbal "mood" supposed to exist in Mokša is the Conditional (Условнай), as in Ahlquist (1861:47-48), Aliamkin (2000:135-6) or Zaicz (1998:200-1). This is in fact not a "mood" but a kind of clitic conjunction. Examples are: /jaka-Ndɛrɛ-n/ 'if I walk' and /jaka-Ndɛrɛ-le-n/ 'if I walked'. Manuals analyzes this conjunction /Ndɛrɛ/ <ндяря> 'if' as a verbal "mood" because it happens to b suffixed to the verb stem. This is descriptively unacceptable. The conjunction ндяря /Ndɛrɛ/ 'if' can be used with either the Present or the Subjunctive. For example, /lama jaka-Ndɛrɛ-n/ 'if I walk a lot' /šuNbra-n/ 'I am in good health', or with the Subjunctive, /lama jaka-Ndɛrɛ-le-n/ 'if I walked a lot' /šuNbra-le-n (bə)/ 'I would be in good health'. The conjunction is inserted between the verb stem /jaka/ and the pronominal segments of the Present: /jakaNdɛrɛn/, /jakaNdɛrɛt/, /jakaNdɛrɛj/, /jakaNdɛrɛtama/, /jakaNdɛrɛtada/, /jakaNdɛrɛçt/. The Subjunctive forms are: /jakaNdɛrɛlen/, /jakaNdɛrɛlet/, /jakaNdɛrɛl/, /jakaNdɛrɛleme/, /jakaNdɛrɛlede/, /jaka-Ndɛrɛłt/. The negation is expressed with /af/ in Mokša (or /a/ in Erzya), and the conjunction remains suffixed to the verb stem: Present, /af/ /jakaNdɛrɛn/, etc. and Subjunctive : /afəlen/ /jakaNdɛrɛ/, etc. It can be noted that Ahlquist (1861:47) describes ндяря as a "Partikel" when he usually uses the word "Endung" for tenses and moods. This detail seems to betray his partial awareness that the status of this "mood" is an issue.

CONCLUSION

In the article I have tried to show that a number of morphological and lexical features of Moksha are difficult to handle. Some lexical classes are clear: Nouns, Adjectives, Verbs. Less clear are the Numerals. Adverbs cannot be completely separated from Pronouns. Nor can some Case-marks and Postpositions be separated from Nouns, with which they often have synchronic relationships. Conjunctions include an odd member which behaves as a verbal suffix and is often considered to be a mood. The exact lexical status of negative segments is

also an open and nearly unsolvable issue depending on which criteria are retained. In addition there exist a number of unclassifiable items.

ABBREVIATIONS

Sg. Singular, Pl. Plural,

Nom. Nominative, Voc. Vocative, Gen. Genitive, Acc. Accusative, Dat. Dative.

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RESUMO: Este trabalho estuda a língua Moksha, pertencente à família de línguas urálicas. Primeiramente, apresenta a língua Moksha e seus registros mais antigos. Então, examina abordagens de partes do discurso e classes lexicais nessa língua, da mesma forma com que foram trabalhados por vários autores, principalmente Ahlquist (1861) e Aliamkin (2000). O trabalho ilustra as dificuldades e as questões enfrentadas na aplicação da estrutura herdada das tradições da língua Grega e Latina a linguagens que apresentam traços tipológicos diferentes do modelo indo-europeu.
PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Moksha; urálica; partes do discurso; lexicografia; tipologia.