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## Properties of definite declension in Moksha<sup>1</sup>

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The Moksha language (Mordvin, Finno-Ugric) has the definite declension. However, the existence of definiteness as a grammatical category in this language is disputable. In my talk I examine the properties of phrases headed by definite declension markers.

Firstly, only nominals in argument positions can be marked with definite affixes, namely, arguments in nominative (subject), genitive (direct object, prenominal modifier or a complement in a postpositional phrase) and dative cases. Definite affixes are compatible with demonstratives and universal quantifiers but not with possessive modifiers. On the one hand, Moksha behaves mostly like an articleless language (with respect to Bošković's tests [Bošković 2008]): it allows adjunct extraction as well as bans negative raising and does not have superiority effects with multiple Wh-fronting. On the other hand, phrases headed by definite declension affixes have wide-scope reading and can block left branch extraction (in contrast to NPs without definite markers where the extraction is possible). Secondly, as for their semantics, definite affixes trigger familiarity presupposition. However, the nominal phrases with definite markers in Moksha can have non-exhaustive reading. They can denote a subset of entities from a certain set (see Enç, 1991 for the notion of partitive specificity). I claim that the definite declension in Moksha realizes a postpositional article with a split depending on DP/NP structural position in a clause, and with non-“exhaustive” partitive semantics. I also argue that these articles realize discourse linkage in argument positions only.

**References:** • Enç, M. (1991): The semantics of specificity. *Linguistic inquiry*, 1-25.  
• Bošković Ž. (2008). What will you have, DP or NP? // *Proceedings of the 37th Annual meeting of the North East linguistic society* / ed. by E. Elfner and M. Walkow. Amherst (MA): GLSA, 2008. P. 101–114.

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