

Abstract of the doctoral thesis

ACTION NOMINAL CONSTRUCTIONS IN MANSI
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1. Introduction

In my thesis I examine the morphological and syntactical characteristics of Northern Mansi action nominal constructions from a typological point of view.

There are two primary aims of my thesis: 1. To give a detailed overview of the morphological and the syntactical behaviour of Mansi action nominal constructions by examining the syntactic environment in which these constructions can appear, their argument structure, their adjuncts as well as their nominal and verbal features. 2. To confront my findings with the typological observations.

Since action nominals in Mansi are closely interlocked with participles, I touch upon the subject of non-finite verb forms, too.

The reason for choosing this topic is that nominalizations and action nominal constructions have been central in linguistic research in the past few decades as they constitute an instance of structures showing categorically ambivalent behaviour (c. f. Alexiadou–Rathert 2010, Ylikoski 2009, Koptjevskaja-Tamm 1993, 2003, 2005, Alexiadou 2001, Laczkó 1997, 1998, 2000 among others).

On the other hand these questions and structures are lesser studied in the Mansi grammar. Action nominals and other non-finite verb forms are usually not distinguished in Mansi grammatical descriptions. Non-finite constructions and their functions (as well as the function of the ‘nomen actionis’) are discussed under the heading of the non-finite verb forms.

2. Methods

I restrict my analysis to the Northern Mansi dialect only, which is also the basis of the Mansi literary language. My research material is taken from folkloric texts collected by Bernát Munkácsi (Munkácsi, 1892–1896) and Artturi Kannisto (Kannisto–Liimola, 1951–1963) cca. 100 years ago. My thesis gives a synchronic typological description of the Mansi language at the end of the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century. The reasons for this are multiple: the present-day language material is not as extensive as the above mentioned ones, and the language variety represented by the folkloric texts is far less influenced by other languages (mainly by

Published papers of the author

Ditranzitív igékből képzett cselekvésnevek a manysiban. [Mansi Action Nominals Derived from Ditransitive Verbs] *Nyelvtudományi Közlemények* 109: 137 – 150. Budapest, 2013.

Cselekvésnevek a manysiban – Az északi manysi cselekvésnevek valenciája. [Action Nominals in Mansi – The Valency of Northern-Mansi Action Nominals] *Folia Uralica Debreceniensia* 18: 3–33. Debrecen, 2011.

A manysi cselekvésnevek szófaji kérdései. [The Verbal and Nominal Features of Mansi Action Nominals] *Nyelvtudományi Közlemények* 105: 255–269. Budapest, 2008.

Cselekvésnevek a vogulban. A nominalizációs skálán való elhelyezés problémái. [Action Nominals in Mansi – How to place them on the scale of nominalizations?] In: *LingDok 3. Nyelvész-doktoranduszok dolgozatai*. JATE Press, Szegedi Tudományegyetem Nyelvtudományi Doktori Iskola, Szeged, 2003: 7–19.

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Russian) than the present-day Mansi. Thus that language state was rather untinged by language contacts and showed more coherent grammatical picture.

The size of my corpus is approximately 160 000 words. The data I used for my analysis includes near 700 clauses containing action nominal constructions. The fact that the target of my investigation is an older language state restricts the possible examinations naturally. The corpus cannot be broadened thus my method is the following: if only a few examples can be found for some phenomenon then I consider it as a possible phenomenon whose presence cannot be stated for sure.

When choosing my corpus, I also examined newer texts from the Mansi newspaper, *Luyima Seripos*. These texts, however, finally were excluded from the corpus due to the reasons mentioned above. In the 7th chapter of my thesis I still give a short analysis of the action nominal constructions of the newer texts, but these data can be considered only tangential information on the modern language. Examination of the action nominal constructions of the newer texts could be the subject of further research.

My analysis of Northern Mansi action nominal constructions is based on the *Leipzig Questionnaire on Nominalizations and mixed categories* (Andrej Malchukov, Maria Koptjevskaja Tamm, Peter Cole, Gabriella Hermon, Jaklin Kornfilt, Bernard Comrie, http://www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/tools/atlingboard/pdf/Malchukov_MixedCategories_Questionnaire.pdf). This questionnaire discusses the different nominalization patterns, their syntactic, morphological and semantic features cross-linguistically. The main focus of the questionnaire are those constructions which show a combination of nominal and verbal features.

In my thesis I restrict my investigation to action nominals with „complex event” reading. In my analysis I don't use those parameters of the questionnaire, which deal with other types of nominalizations, nor those, which cannot be properly examined on the basis of my data or without mother tongue competence. The parameters of the questionnaire and my analysis based on them are completed with other sources as well.

3. Outline of the thesis

The aim of my thesis is to show the morphological and syntactical features of Mansi action nominal constructions. Since action nominals constitute a type of nominalization, after the introduction and the description of the corpus chapter two presents the types and functions of nominalization.

Chapter three is concerned with the definition of action nominals and action nominal constructions, the emerging problems and the different approaches to the analysis of action nominal constructions.

Since action nominals in Mansi are closely interlocked with other non-finite verbs, chapter four discusses the difficulties of defining non-finite forms and analyses their mutual relation.

Chapter five gives an overview of the non-finite verbs in the Mansi grammatical descriptions. At the end of the chapter I argue that in Mansi the deverbal nouns in *-n* and *-m* – traditionally considered participles – stand as action nominals (with a „complex event” reading) as well.

Chapter six presents the detailed analysis of the morphological and syntactical features of Mansi action nominal constructions on the basis of the questionnaire mentioned above (*Leipzig Questionnaire on Nominalizations and mixed categories*).

Chapter seven briefly discusses the action nominal constructions of the newer texts.

Chapter eight gives an overview of the main functions of Mansi action nominal constructions and finally, chapter nine gives a brief summary and the conclusions of the thesis.

The thesis ends with Acknowledgements and Bibliography.

4. Action nominals and action nominal constructions

Following Comrie and Thompson (1985) and Koptjevskaja-Tamm (1993, 2005), I define action nominal constructions as follows:

Action nominal constructions (ANCs) are noun phrases which have an action nominal (AN) (a noun derived from a verb) as their head, and which also contain one or more reflexes of a proposition or a predicate, e. g.

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seems to be less frequent in the newer ones (as mentioned above). This would also mean that the active/passive distinction is mostly lost even in syntactically in the ANCs recently.

Regarding the further parameters of my survey (like marking of the oblique arguments, combining with modifiers, and appearance of nominal categories) no difference can be detected between the ANCs of the older and the newer texts.

7. The main functions of the action nominal constructions

Finally I give an overview on the most typical and most frequent functions of Mansi ANCs, characteristic of both older and newer texts.

The most typical and most frequent function of ANCs is the expression („substitution”) of adverbial clauses. In particular, the ANCs can express action or event that happened before, after or at the same time as the action expressed by the finite verb, or they can express a kind of terminus as well. Another, less frequent function of the ANCs is the expression of present perfect. These ANCs are constructed as follows: *action nominal + period of time in translative + jēmtəs* 'became'.

ANCs frequently substitute causal or purpose clauses with the postposition *māγəs* 'because of; in order to, for'. The number of this kind of constructions shows a definite increase in the newer texts, and their use is completely consequent, it seems to be almost the only way of expressing reason or purpose.

Finally the least frequent function of ANCs is to express negation with the combination of the action nominal and the predicate *ā'īm* (negative existential verb). These constructions are quite rare due to the fact that they do not represent the standard form of negation, but they are still typical constructions also attested in Khanty, the other Ob-Ugric language.

Regarding the main functions of ANCs in conclusion it can be stated that these functions are even more apparent and more frequently applied in the newer texts. Instead of time-, purpose-, reason- and manner adverbial clauses action nominal constructions with action nominals in *-n* and *-m* are used typically and consequently in newer Mansi texts. Suffixes *-n* and *-m* seem to be completely productive for deriving action nominals from any verb, and for creating action nominals usually these suffixes are used accordingly.

(1) *the enemy's destruction of the city (the enemy destroyed the city);*

(2) *the loud chanting in the quad (chanting loudly in the quad)*

(Comrie 1976: 178, Comrie and Thompson 1985: 358)

Action nominal constructions typically have some of the syntactic features of both finite sentences and noun phrases with a non-derived noun as their head.

Action nominals are nouns, or such word forms that at least occur in typical nominal positions and show inflectional properties and/or combinability with adpositions typical of nouns. They are derived from verbs in some reasonably productive way, either derivationally or inflectionally, and refer to events and/or facts (Koptjevskaja-Tamm 2005). Action nominals refer to events, like verbs do, but in contrast with verbs they do it by giving the events a name. So action nominals combine verbal and nominal features in their semantics and in their morphology and different languages treat them as being closer to verbs or nouns (Koptjevskaja-Tamm 1993: 6).

In Mansi we find the deverbal nouns in *-n* and *-m* corresponding to the definition given above. These deverbal nouns are considered present and past participles traditionally. Interlocking of action nominals and other non-finite verb forms (the infinitive, the participle and the gerund/converb) in Northern Mansi is not a unique case; there are several instances cross-linguistically, too. Non-finites are most typically used in more than one syntactic function (cf. Ylikoski 2003: 187).

Action nominals and other non-finite verb forms are usually not distinguished in Mansi grammatical descriptions. Non-finite constructions and their functions (as well as the function of the 'nomen actionis') are discussed under the heading of the non-finite verb forms (c. f. Szabó 1904: 425, 433–436; Sz. Kispál 1966; Rombandeeva 1973: 146–147; 1979: 44–49; Kálmán 1989: 62, 70; Riese 2001: 65–70). Authors do not even treat the non-finites uniformly: they discuss them under deverbal nouns (Szabó 1904) or as non-finite verb forms under verbs (Rombandeeva 1973) or under syntax (Riese 2001b) or treat them as a separate word class (Kálmán 1976). While presenting the syntax of Mansi, they mention that constructions with non-finites are replacing subordinate clauses and they also list the most typical constructions. It is mentioned as well that the

participles and the converb can function as a noun, i.e. as an action nominal (nomen actionis).

In my thesis I argue that in certain constructions the Mansi deverbal nouns in *-n* and *-m* stand as action nominals (with a „complex event” reading) and not as participles. The proof for this claim is originating in the syntactic position of these deverbal nouns (they stand as the head of a noun phrase and not as attributes of nouns, and they can combine with case suffixes and postpositions) as well as in their inability of expressing (relative) tense (without case suffixes or postpositions).

- (3) *lū-majt tārä pos - nū - iy pajta - we*
 horse-liver through cook-AN-TRANSL cook-PASS[3SG]
 'Horse-liver is being cooked until it is
 completely/properly cooked.' (VNGy¹ IV: 419)
- (4) *pōl' - əm tow tōl - ma - tä sujt - i*
 freeze-PTCP.PST branch break-AN-SG<3SG can.be.heard-PRES[3SG]
 'Snapping of a frozen branch can be heard.'
 (VNGy III: 70)

Since the action nominals in *-n* and *-m* show only a few differences concerning their morphological and syntactic behaviour, I discuss them together, referring to their rarely occurring differences when it seems to be necessary.

5. Results

Hereinafter I present my results following the parameters of the questionnaire and the outline of the thesis.

5.1. What kind of constructions do the given nominalizations appear in?

Mansi action nominals in *-n* and *-m* can appear in complement clauses and in adverbial clauses. They can appear in all positions characteristic of nouns: as subjects, direct objects, adverbs and subject of

¹ VNGy = Munkácsi Bernát (1892–1896): *Vogul Népköltési Gyűjtemény I–IV*. MTA, Budapest.

characteristic of noun phrases.

6. Action nominals in recent Mansi texts

In my thesis I also made a complementary examination of the ANCs in recent Mansi texts, my findings, however, cannot be considered as exhaustive. It was not my intention to give a detailed analysis of these texts, but to provide a general overview of the ANCs in the recent variety of the language. My analysis was based on 14 issues (62 800 words, 200 ANCs) of the Mansi newspaper *Luyima Seripos*.

I found that there is no significant difference in the morphological and syntactical features nor in the use of ANCs between the older and newer texts. Action nominals appear in the same positions as in the folklore texts. On the basis of the examples it seems that the marking of the basic arguments has not changed either. The subject of both intransitive and transitive verbs is still expressed by nominal (possessive-style) marking. The nominal direct object is still unmarked in ANCs and the pronominal object retains its original marking (the accusative).

The most important difference is the remarkable increase of action nominals without possessive suffixes, i.e. action nominals without subject agreement. This can be explained by the nature of the source of the data: impersonal or passive structures are very frequent and typical in the newspaper-texts, and in these structures the action nominal has a general, indefinite or unknown subject. It seems that in case of this kind of subject there is no subject agreement in the ANCs. While in the folklore texts the action nominal of these passive ANCs agreed with the direct object, in the newer texts it is not necessarily the case, as in most of the passive ANCs there is no subject nor object agreement.

Another difference between the older and the newer texts is the change of the proportion of overt and zero subjects. In the folklore texts, according to our preliminary expectations, if the action nominal agrees with the subject, then it is less typical for the subject to be present in the ANC but if there is no agreement with the subject, then ANCs containing an overt subject is more frequent. However, it seems that in the newer texts an almost inverse situation can be found, or at least the traces of the loosening of the „logical” order are observable.

Concerning the retaining of verbal categories there is no change in ANCs in the recent variety. The only possible difference could be that the object agreement characteristic of passive ANCs in the older texts

verbs) as a possessor in the nominalized construction, i.e. appearing of the nominal possessive-style agreement.

3. Appearing of the nominal type of agreement also in the case of the direct object in ANCs with a passive meaning.

Their verbal features are as follows:

1. The ability of the pronominal direct object for retaining its accusative case.
2. Preserving the verbal category of negation.
3. Combining with verbal (adverbial) modifiers.

As it can be seen, most of the verbal categories are lost in the nominalization and those which are retained – except for negation –, are retained only syntactically (voice), or only partly or combining with nominal features (expressing the direct object in passive ANCs, subject and object agreement). Nominal features are, however, almost completely retained, except for that allowing nominal modifiers is uncharacteristic of ANCs.

Considering these facts, Mansi action nominals seem to be of more nominal than verbal nature.

5.7. Action nominal constructions: similarities with clauses and noun phrases – Conclusions

Mansi ANCs are similar to noun phrases in the way of expressing the subject, since subject appears as a possessor in the nominalized constructions. Expression of the direct object in the passive ANCs is similar as well, this is also a feature rather characteristic of noun phrases.

The facts, that the pronominal direct object retains its accusative case and that oblique arguments appear in the ANCs in a similar form than in the sentences, however, link Mansi ANCs rather to sentences with a finite verb. Combining with adverbial modifiers is also a feature characteristic of sentences. The presence of subject agreement in ANCs can also be regarded as a sentential feature, although unlike in sentences, in ANCs it is not compulsory and it is not the sentential (verbal) type of agreement. (The possibility of object agreement in ANCs can be partly considered a sentential feature, too, this agreement, however, is strongly limited /appears only in passive ANCs/ and even if it appears, it is a nominal style of agreement.)

In conclusion it can be stated that Mansi action nominal constructions seem to have more sentential features than those features

adpositions.

5.2. Basic syntax

Concerning the basic syntax of action nominals, their valency is one of the central and most intriguing issues. The expression of the subject and the direct object in the action nominal constructions provide perhaps the most interesting evidence for the hybrid verbal-nominal nature of the action nominal.

In Mansi ANCs the subject of both intransitive and transitive verbs appear as unmarked possessor, or it is only cross-referenced by the possessive-style agreement. In case of transitive ANCs both arguments (the subject and direct object) can be present: the subject as an unmarked possessor (as mentioned above) and the direct object is also unmarked if it is a noun, while it is in the accusative case if it is a pronoun (similarly to the sentences with a finite verb). The order of the arguments corresponds to the basic word-order of Mansi (SOV). However, in the majority of the examples only the direct object is present in the construction and the subject is only cross-referenced by the possessive-style agreement.

In case of ANCs with a passive meaning, the (general or indefinite) subject is not expressed in the construction while the action nominal agrees with the direct object instead of the subject (in the possessive-style agreement).

In conclusion we can claim that Mansi ANCs belong to the Possessive-Accusative type of nominalizations (the subject of both intransitive and transitive verbs appears as a possessor while the direct object retains its original marking).

Applying the possessive-style agreement in the ANCs is not compulsory, but the majority of the examples contains action nominals agreeing with the subject. According to the preliminary expectations, if the action nominal agrees with the subject, then it is less typical for the subject to be present in the ANC (thus the „double marking” is not necessary but it is not forbidden either). However, if there is no agreement with the subject, then ANCs containing an overt subject is more frequent (but omitting of the subject is possible, too).

5.3. Deverbalization: morphological aspects

Concerning the verbal features of Mansi action nominals it can be stated that most of these features are lost in nominalization. Tense and mood are not retained at all, action nominals can express a kind of relative tense (compared to the finite verb of the sentence) in certain cases only by case suffixes and postpositions.

The active/passive distinction characteristic of the finite verbs is not retained morphologically in ANCAs either. However, it is retained syntactically, namely in those „passive” ANCAs, in which the subject is not expressed but the action nominal agrees with the (emphatic) direct object instead of the subject (see above). Thus the object agreement is also retained only in these „passive” ANCAs while it is lost in the active ones. Object agreement in these ANCAs, however, is a possessive-style agreement unlike in the case of finite verbs (using verbal suffixes).

Similarly to the object agreement, the subject agreement appearing in ANCAs is also a possessive-style agreement: a possessive suffix on the action nominal can refer to the original subject of the nominalized verb, but the presence of this possessive suffix (as an agreement marker) is not compulsory.

Besides these features, the verbal category of negation is preserved in ANCAs as well. This operates similarly in case of action nominals and finite verbs regarding both its form and function.

5.4. Deverbalization: syntactic aspects

Comparing Mansi ANCAs to sentences with finite verbs, I examine the marking of the subject, the direct object as well as other arguments and modifiers.

As it was mentioned above, the subject of both intransitive and transitive verbs appears unmarked in ANCAs, similarly to sentences. However, while subject agreement on the finite verb is compulsory in the sentences, in ANCAs it is optional. In most of the examples the action nominal still agrees with the subject, but this agreement is a nominal (possessive)-style agreement instead of the verbal type agreement present in the sentences.

The direct object is also expressed similarly in both sentences and ANCAs: the nominal direct object in nominative case while the pronominal one in accusative. In sentences there can be present object agreement as

well, but the rules of this agreement are not completely clear. In nominalization the object agreement can be found only in the „passive” ANCAs, but it is not the verbal, but the nominal type of agreement.

The oblique arguments – as it is attested cross-linguistically – retain their original form also in Mansi ANCAs, and they appear with case suffixes or postpositions required by the original verb, similarly to sentences.

Regarding the modifiers it can be stated that Mansi action nominals in *-n* and *-m* most frequently combine with time adverbs, but they can also combine with place and manner adverbs. Nominal modifiers (adjectives) are not used in Mansi ANCAs, the action nominals combine with verbal (adverbial) modifiers instead.

5.5. Substantivization: morphological and syntactic aspects

Concerning the nominal categories, Mansi action nominals in *-n* and *-m* can combine with certain case suffixes (locative and translative), possessive suffixes (as agreement markers agreeing with the subject or the direct object) as well as postpositions. Combination with the translative suffix is typical only for the action nominals in *-n* while the locative ending is mostly combined with the action nominals in *-m*. Regarding postpositions, action nominals in *-n* mostly combine with *χalt* 'during, when' and action nominals in *-m* most frequently combine with *jui-pält* 'after'. Clear examples for action nominals combining with determiners (demonstratives) were not found in my corpus. Allowing nominal (adjectival) modification is uncharacteristic of Mansi action nominals.

5.6. Action nominals: nominal and verbal features – Conclusions

On the basis of my analysis Mansi action nominals in *-n* and *-m* show a mixture of nominal and verbal features and action nominal constructions containing them have the syntactic features of both finite sentences and noun phrases with a non-derived noun as their head accordingly.

Mansi action nominals have the following nominal features:

1. The ability of combining with case suffixes, postpositions and possessive suffixes.
2. Appearing of the subject (of both intransitive and transitive