

The logo consists of the word "INFUSE" in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters on a blue rectangular background. To the right of the text is a small white circle containing twelve small white stars, arranged in a ring, mimicking the European Union flag.

ERZYA E-LEARNING COURSE, GRAMMATICAL DESCRIPTION

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E-learning course: Erzya

THE MORDVINS



Moksha Mordvin girls



Flag of the Mordvin Republic

Erzya Mordvin women

Mordvins = Erzyas and Mokshas

The Mordvins are divided into two ethnic groups, Erzyas and Mokshas. The Mordvins reside in their own republic which is part of the Russian Federation (25,266 km²), in the territory between the Volga tributaries, the Oka and the Sura. Only 27% of the Mordvins dwell in the titular republic; the majority live in scattered enclaves over a very extensive area to the north and south of the borders of the republic as well as widely in the zone reaching to the Ural Mountains. According to the last Soviet census (1989) there were 1,154,000 Mordvins, although of these only 67% spoke their mother tongue Erzya or Moksha. The second Russian census (2010) estimated the number of Mordvins to have decreased by over 30 %, that is, to 806,000. About two-thirds of the Mordvins speak Erzya and one-third Moksha, which to some extent are mutually understandable. Literary languages for both groups were developed in the 1920s. The Mordvin languages belong to the Volgaic branch of the Finno-Ugric languages. The Russians began converting the Mordvins to the Orthodox faith as early as the 15th century. Although the conversion work was completed by the 18th century, even at the beginning of the 20th century the traditional polytheistic religion had, in places, survived alongside Christianity.

History

The ancestors of the Mordvins inhabited the same area as their descendants today. They began to form their own individual ethnos about 3000 years ago. A common Mordvin language can be dated from ca 300 AD that had by the end of the millennium diverged into Erzya and Moksha. In the 8th century the Mordvins came into contact with the Volga Bulgars that spoke a Turkic language and whose mercantile state was situated in the Middle Volga, and to which the surrounding nations paid tribute. In the 11th and 12th centuries the Russians penetrated into the Mordvin territory. Their advance was halted by the arrival of the Tatars. The Tatars established a powerful state on the Volga (the Golden Horde and later the Khanate of Kazan), to whom the Mokshas in particular were subjected, while the Erzyas remained in territory controlled by the Russians.

The Russians overthrew the Khanate of Kazan in 1552. The flight of the Mordvins to the east and south from their core area commenced at the end of the 16th century and continued briskly until the 17th. The Mordvins participated in many rebellions against Russian rule, and after the resulting defeats migration continued up to the 18th century. Even in the 19th century Mordvins also migrated in large numbers to Siberia and Kazakhstan. In the 1920s 11% of the Mordvins dwelt in Siberia.

The Mordvins were in close contact first with the Volga Bulgars, then with the Tatars, from whom the Mokshas in particular have assimilated certain cultural features. The influence of the earlier Turkic rulers can still be heard in Erzya and Moksha in the more than 200 loanwords that were borrowed into the Mordvin languages from Bolgar-Chuvash and Tatar. The Russian influence began partly as early as the 12th century but gained momentum towards the end of the 16th. The Russian influence is evident in the language (phonetics, syntax, loanwords) and in culture (e.g. building style). Now both Erzya and Moksha languages have thousands of Russian loanwords.

Religion

The Mordvins' own ethnic religion was polytheist. The most important was the supreme god, namely, the god-creator and his relatives. The gods lived in the Upper World, and they were petitioned to ensure the success of one's own life and livelihood. The essentials for human life were all determined by the so-called mothers: female spirits (e.g. earth spirit, field spirit, water spirit). In the Lower World lived the departed.

Material culture

The main occupations of the Mordvins have for more than the last one thousand years been agriculture and cattle husbandry. Hunting and fishing have provided a secondary means of livelihood. In forest areas beekeeping has also played a vital part. The Mordvins are mainly country folk. In the capital Saransk as in the other towns the majority of inhabitants are Russians.

Folklore, art

The Mordvins have long mythic and heroic songs, as well as ballads and lyrical songs. These songs observe a strict syllabic metre, which originated as early as the common Mordvin period. Typical of these are parallelisms and extensive use of formulas. Songs are performed either in unison or as part singing. There is also a tradition of long fairytales. In Mordvin tradition the lamentation (wedding, funeral and recruitment laments) had a central place until the second half of the 20th century. Some epics have been composed on the basis of themes from Mordvin epic poetry. The most significant of these is Mastorava ('mother earth'), compiled by Aleksandr Sharonov and published in 1994; it is based directly on old folk poems.

A few books were published in Erzya and Moksha in the 19th century, but for the most part the Erzya and Moksha literary languages began to develop in and after the 1920s.

The most renowned Mordvin artist is the sculptor Stepan Erzya (1876–1953). His powerful, often massive sculptures depicted just as often mythic and biblical figures as emotions.

Development of literary languages and present situation

A few books, mainly religious texts, were published in different dialects of Erzya and Moksha in the 19th century. Also the grammars of Erzya and Moksha were published in the 19th century (in Russia, Finland and Hungary).

The development of the Erzya and Moksha literary languages commenced in the 1920s, and Mordvin language cultural institutions were established. The central dialect (the village Kozlovka) was chosen as the basis of Erzya literary language, and the Moksha literary language is based on the Moksha central dialects. In 1928 the Autonomous District of Mordvins was established, and in 1934 it was made into an autonomous socialist republic which in 1994 became the Republic of Mordovia. Only 32% of the inhabitants are Mordvins, and of the Mordvins two-thirds live outside

of the Republic. In the latter part of the 1930s during Joseph Stalin's administration the terrors began, and the entire Mordvin intelligentsia was either imprisoned or put to death on the basis of fabricated charges. The national identity began to deteriorate as a result of the purges. Due to the school reform in the 1950s the system of instruction in the mother tongue began to fall apart, so that nowadays Mordvin is taught for a few hours in the week only in the first grade and as a subject. In 1989 33% of Mordvins did not know their own language; in the 2010 census the percentage had further grown to almost 50. As most of these belong to the younger age groups, the language change process will continue with an accelerating tempo in the coming decades. The scattered nature of Mordvin settlement has made them very susceptible to assimilation.

The disintegration of the Soviet Union and the democratisation of Russia triggered a fragile national revival even in the Mordvin territories, but it was caught in the bud quickly with the emergence of economic difficulties. A law on language was enacted in 1998, but is so vaguely worded as to be unable to guarantee rights for users of Mordvin. During the administration of Vladimir Putin centralised power in Russia has been reinforced and the rights of minority nations in legislative matters and education, for example, downgraded.

All Erzyas and Mokshas are bilingual. The Erzya/Moksha–Russian bilingualism is unidirectional; Russian speakers do not acquire command of Mordvin languages. The amount of children studying Erzya or Moksha in kindergartens or schools is diminishing at an accelerating pace. (See, e.g., Konstantin Zamyatin: Russia's minority education and the European Language Charter. In: *Linguistic genocide or superdiversity. New and old language diversities*, 249–283. Multilingual Matters, Bristol – Buffalo – Toronto 2016.)



ERZYA LANGUAGE, GENERAL

Both Mordvin languages are morphologically rich and have special features not existing in other Finno-Permic languages. Erzya and Moksha are to a great extent mutually intelligible, although there are some differences in phonology, morphology and vocabulary (Moksha has more Turkic loanwords than Erzya). Erzya and Moksha dialects started to diverge from each other in the middle of the first millennium. This process gradually led to two distinct languages after the 8th century. There are, however, many mixed dialects, of which it is difficult to determine whether they belong to Erzya or Moksha.

The Mordvin languages are much closer to the Finnic languages than Mari is. The following features will be more thoroughly presented during the course.

Noun declension

The Mordvin languages have an indefinite and a definite declension. The indefinite declension has 12 cases. In plural nouns can be inflected only in the definite declension. The suffixes of definiteness go back to pronominal stems (e. g. *кудо* : *кудо-сь* (house-DEF) 'house : the house', *кудо-т* : *кудо-тне* (house-PL : house-PL-DEF) 'houses : the houses'.

Verb conjugation

The Mordvin languages are especially rich in moods. Besides indicative there are six other moods: imperative, conditional, conjunctive, conditional-conjunctive, desiderative, optative.

Mordvin has an objective (definite) conjugation. Its suffixes indicate the person and the number of both the subject and the object. There are, however, not 6x6=36 different suffixes, because the suffixes for plural objects show lot of homonymy and some forms are pragmatically impossible (e.g. forms where both the subject and the object would be the same person). E.g. *пала-н* (kiss-1SG) 'I kiss', *пала-т* (kiss-2SG) 'you kiss' but *пала-тян* (kiss-1SG>2SG) 'I kiss you', *пала-сак* (kiss-2SG>3SG) 'you kiss him/her'.

Nominal conjugation

In Mordvin nouns can be conjugated like verbs when they function as predicatives/predicates in stative relation clauses. E.g. *мазы-ян* (beautiful-1SG) 'I am beautiful', *мазый-тядо* (beautiful-2PL) 'you are beautiful', *кудо-с-ам* (house-INE-2SG) 'you are in the house', *кудо-со-нзо-ли-нь* (house-INE-PX3SG-2PRET-1SG) 'I was in his/her house'.

PHONOLOGY

Consonants

Erzya has 26 consonant phonemes used in autochthonous words and three used only in Russian loanwords (x, ф, щ).

UPA	Cyrillic
k	к
t t'	т ть or т followed by a front vowel or ё, ю, я
p	п
g	г
d d'	д дь or д followed by a front vowel or ё, ю, я
b	б
j	й or word-initially е, ё, ю, я
v	в
s ś	с сь or с followed by a front vowel or ё, ю, я
z ź	з зь or з followed by a front vowel or ё, ю, я
š	ш
ž	ж
c ć	ц ць or ц followed by a front vowel or ё, ю, я
č	ч
r ř	р рь or р followed by a front vowel or ё, ю, я
l l'	л ль or л followed by a front vowel or ё, ю, я
n ŋ	н нь or н followed by a front vowel or ё, ю, я
m	м
χ	х
f	ф
šč ~ šš	щ

Erzya has a correlation of voice: voiceless stops and sibilants have voiced pairs (seven pairs: k : g, t : d, t' : d', p : b, s : z, ś : ź, š : ž). They have originally come into being word-internally between voiced sounds (e.g. vowels) or via loanwords. Now they can occur also word-initially especially in descriptive words and loanwords.

Both Mordvin languages have a strong palatalization tendency. Before a front vowel all consonants are/become palatalized, but only the dentals are considered as independent phonemes: t : t', d : d', s : ś, z : ź, c : ć, r : ř, l : l', n : ŋ. These dentals are called paired. Consonants not having a palatalized pair (k, g, p, b etc.) are called pairless.

The dialects of Atrat and Alatyř have a velar nasal consonant ŋ going back to the Proto-Finno-Ugric *ŋ. In other dialects it has become v or j. ŋ most often occurs word-finally.

Palatalization of consonants is shown in Cyrillic either with the "soft sign" ь or with the following vowels е, и, ё, ю, я (see below the chapter on vowels). E.g. *кедь* [ked'] 'hand', *кедь-сэ* [ked'-se] hand-INE, but *кедень* [ked'-eń] hand-GEN (it is problematic to gloss the Cyrillic form: the е preceding the genitive suffix ń is a connecting vowel; if we put the hyphen between д and е, the palatalization of the stem-final dental is not shown).

Vowels

Erzya has only five vowels:

UPA	u	i	Cyrillic	у	и ~ ы
	o	e		о	е
	a			а	

All the vowels are short.

After a non-palatalized consonant i is pronounced more back (i̯). Therefore it is written in Cyrillic with the letter ы after non-palatalized dentals, e.g. *сырне* [sɨr̩ne] 'gold'. It is, however, only an allophone of i.

If the back vowels u, o, a follow a palatalized dental consonant, the palatalization is marked in Cyrillic by using the so-called j-initial vowels: ю [ju], ё [jo], я [ja], e.g. *сюльмо* [śulmo] 'knot', *сёкс* [śokś] 'autumn', *сядо* [śado] '100'. Thus these letters are used to indicate the palatalization of the preceding consonant. They are also used in words, which have a word-initial ju-, jo-, ja-, e.g. *юр* [jur] 'root', *ёвкс* [jovks] 'fairy-tale', *якамс* [jakams] 'to wander'.

The front vowel e is written in Cyrillic word-initially and after a vowel or after a non-palatalized dental consonant with the letter э, e.g. *эске* [eske] 'nail', *поэт* [poet] 'poet', *сэнь* [seń] 'blue'. After palatalized consonants or after a consonant having no palatalized pair it is written with the Cyrillic е (which is also a j-initial vowel), e.g. *мев* [t'ev] 'work', *кев* [kev] 'stone'. The Cyrillic е is also used in a word-internal position after a vowel, e.g. *неель* [pejel] 'knife', and word-initially in Russian loanwords, e.g. *европейской* [jevropejskoj] 'European'.

Vowel harmony

Erzya has a velar vowel harmony but it does not apply to the vowels *a* and *i*.

If the first syllable has a back vowel, all the following syllables will also have a back vowel (or *i*). If the first syllable has a front vowel, all the following syllables will also have a front vowel (or *a*). This applies to all suffixes, too. E. g. *кудо-со-нзо* [kudo-so-nzo] house-INE-PX3SG 'in his/her house'; *веле-сэ-нзе* [vel'e-se-nze] village-INE-PX3SG 'in his/her village'. – ! However, if there is a palatal dental consonant at the end of the first syllable or after it in the word, the next syllables will have front vowels, too, e.g. *узе́ре* [užéře] 'axe'.

Table 1. The orthography of Erzya vowels.

After non palatalized dentals	а,	о,	у,	э,	ы
After palatalized dentals	я,	ё,	ю,	е,	и
After pairless consonants	а,	о,	у,	е,	и

Stress

The word stress in Erzya is free, but most often it falls on the first syllable.

MORPHOLOGY

NOUNS¹

There are 12 cases in Erzya Mordvin. Below I give the case suffixes and the history of the suffixes and describe the most common functions of the cases. If a word ends in a consonant, a binding vowel (e or o according to the vowel harmony) is usually needed before most case endings. In glossing the hyphen is then placed before the binding vowel.

INDEFINITE DECLENSION, SINGULAR

Nominative Ø

Subjects are, of course, in nominative but indefinite objects take nominative, too. E.g. *лишме рам-и-нь* horse buy-PST1-SG1 'I bought a horse'. Also the predicative (noun predicate) takes nominative. E. g. *сон ломань* s/he man 's/he is a human being'.

Genitive -нь

Genitive has the suffix -нь, which goes back to the FU genitive ending *-n. There is no proper explanation for the palatalization of the genitive suffix in Mordvin.

Genitive expresses possession (in a broad sense of the word). E.g. *тикше-нь чине* grass-GEN smell 'smell of grass', *эрзя-нь ул-не-сь айгор-озо* Erzya-GEN be-DUR-PST1.3SG stallion-PX3SG.SG. Genitive is used with postpositions, e.g. *пильге-нь ало* foot-GEN PSTP 'under the feet'. In Mordvin (as also in Finnish and Northern Saami) the suffixes of the genitive (*-n) and the accusative (*-m) have merged into one: -нь. Therefore the genitive is used with definite objects, which are then in definite declension. However, proper names (being definite by nature) take the indefinite genitive when they occur as objects. The indefinite genitive is used in objects of infinite forms, e.g. *ту-сь пенге-нь керя-мо* go-PST1.3SG wood-GEN hew-INF1 '(s/he) went to hew wood'.

¹ Primary source of this chapter: Raija Bartens: *Mordvalaiskielten rakenne ja kehitys*. Mémoires de la Société Finno-Ougrienne 232. Helsinki 1999.

Dative -нень

Suffix of the dative is -нень. Its history is a bit obscure, but as the corresponding suffix in Moksha is clearly the outcome of the genitive -нь and the postposition теҥь- 'to' (М -нди) we can assume that the Erzya form has the same origin.

Dative is the case used adverbials denoting to whom something is given, e.g. сёрмад-ан сёрма сазор-нень write-1SG letter sister-DAT 'I write a letter to sister'. It also expresses to whom spatially, e.g. мол-сь ава-нень go-PST1.3SG mother-DAT '(s/he) went to mother'. Dative expresses the agent in modal, especially neccessive, sentences, e.g. цёра-нень симе-мс эряв-и boy-DAT drink-INF2 have.to-3SG 'boy has to drink'.

Ablative -до, -де, -дэ, -то, -те, -тэ

The suffix goes back to PFU separative *-tA (cf. the partitive in Finnish). The ablative is originally a separative meaning 'from where?', but nowadays it is used in this meaning only in old adverbs/postpositions, e.g. лис-емс лато ал-до come.out-INF2 roof PSTP-ABL 'to come out from under the roof', and in clichés containing an other adverbial with the illative suffix, e.g. кудо-до кудо-с house-ABL house-ILL 'from house to house'.

The Mordvin ablative has almost identical functions with the Finnish partitive. It is used in objects with certain verbs, such as to eat, to drink, to fear, to stop (from), to avoid, to protect (against). E.g. with a partial object сим-ан вед-те² drink-1SG water-ABL 'I am drinking water', ярс-ат кал-до eat-2SG fish-ABL 'you are eating fish', пел-ян киска-до fear-1SG dog-ABL 'I am afraid of dog'. A partial subject can take ablative in sentences with quantifiers, e.g. тумо-тне-де колмо-ль oak-PL.DEF-ABL three-PST.3SG 'there were three oaks (lit. the oaks were three)'. Ablative is used in compariston, too, e.g. кизе теле-де папо summer winter-ABL good 'summer is better than winter'.

² The stem *ведь* [ved'] gets the suffix variant *-me*, because a voiced geminate [d'd] is not possible in the Erzya phonotactics. *вед-me* is pronounced [vet't'e].

Inessive -co, -cə³

The Mordvin inessive -co, -cə goes back to the same Finno-Volgaic form *-s-nA as its cognates in Finnish, Saami and Mari (in dialects one can find forms which have preserved the n: dial. on-sne sleep-INE).

Inessive is an adverbial case answering the question 'where?', e.g. мон ул-н-и-нь базар-со I be-DUR-PST1-1SG market-INE 'I was in the market'. It also functions as an instrumental, e.g. кавто сока-со сока-зъ two plough-INE plough-PST.PCTP 'ploughed with two ploughs'.

Especially the verb 'to wait' but also some other irresultative (continuative) verbs govern inessive objects, e.g. уч-ан Маша-со wait-1SG Maša-INE 'I am waiting for Maša'.

Elative -cto, -ctə⁴

The Mordvin elative -cto, -ctə goes back to the common Finno-Volgaic suffix *-s-tA (cf. the corresponding cases in Finnic and Saami languages).

Elative is used in adverbials expressing source; it answers the question 'from where?', e.g. лис-сь базар-cto leave-PST.3SG market-ELA 's/he left from the market'. Elative is very frequent in adverbials of time, e.g. эрьва чи-ctə every day-ELA 'every day'. All adjectives can be changed into adverbs with the suffix of the elative, e.g. вадря 'good' > вадря-cto 'well'.

Illative -c

The illative suffix -c is found in all Finno-Volgaic languages as such expressing 'to, into' and also as part of compound case endings (elative, inessive).

It is used in adverbials denoting 'to, into', e.g. сов-ат баня-с enter-2SG sauna-ILL 'you go into the sauna'. With verbs of motion it expresses the purpose, e.g. панг-с мол-емс mushroom-ILL go-INF2 'to go (to gather) mushroom' (cf. Finn. men-nä siene-en go-INF1 mushroom-ILL id.).

Illative occurs in temporal adverbials with a terminative meaning, e.g. валске-с morning-ILL 'until morning, by morning'.

³ NB The *c* of the inessive ending is never palatalized; therefore э!

⁴ NB The *cm* of the elative ending is never palatalized!

Lative -в

The lative suffix goes back to *-ŋ. The velar nasal is still preserved in the dialects of Atrat and Alatyř. In some dialects we see -v only in words with back vowels and correspondingly -j in words with front vowels.

The lative is used in adverbials denoting 'where to?'. Its use is semantically restricted to nouns denoting space. Often it can freely alternate with illative, e.g. мол-ян лекция-в ~ лекция-с go-1SG lecture-LAT ~ lecture-ILL 'I go to a lecture'. The exact use of the lative remains obscure (see, however, Alhoniemi 1985, 45–53⁵). There is no lative in the definite declension.

Prolative -ва, -га, -ка

The prolative suffix goes back to *-kA bearing a lative meaning. The variant -ва appears after a vowel, -га after a voiced consonant and -ка after a voiceless consonant.

Prolative occurs in adverbials expressing 'through what? along what?', e.g. Петя як-и пакся-ва Petja walk-3SG field-PRO 'Petja is walking on the field', не-ян вальма-ва see-1SG window-PRO 'I see through the window'. If something happens or is present in several places at the same time, prolative is used instead of inessive, e.g. эр-ить веле-ва live-3PL village-PRO 'they live in villages'.

Translative -кc

The suffix goes back to the same derivative *-ks-suffix, which is used as a case ending (translative) in the Finnic languages, too.

Translative is used in predicative adverbials expressing that somebody becomes something or is functioning as something (cf. the Finnish translative and essive). E. g. теев-сѣ сыре атя-кc change-PST1.3SG old man-TRA 'he changed into an old man', сон важд-и учитль-кc s/he work-3SG teacher-TRA 's/he is working as a teacher'. Translative is also used in adverbial expressing manner, e.g. авард-емс эйкакш-окс cry-INF2- child-TRA 'to cry like a baby'. Speaking in some language is expressed with a translative, e.g. эрзя-кc корт-и Erzya-TRA speak-3SG 's/he speaks Erzya' (but always "language-INE": корт-и эрзя-нь кель-сѣ speak-3SG Erzya-GEN language-INE 's/he speaks Erzya!').

⁵ Alho Alhoniemi 1985: Über die Wohinkasus im Mordwinischen. *Ural-Altäische Jahrbücher, Neue Folge* 5, 45–53. Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz.

Comparative -шка

The suffix has developed from a noun *шка* 'time' through grammaticalization.

Comparative bears the meaning 'of the same size, as big as', e.g. *тейтересь ава-шка daughter-DEF mother-CMP* 'the daughter is as big as the mother'. Comparative can also be used to make numerals approximative, e.g. *кавто-шка two-CMP* 'about two'. Most grammars present comparative as an independent case. However, it does not seem to have any syntactic functions, and *-шка* could as well be interpreted as a derivative suffix.

Abessive -втомo, -втеме, -томo, -теме

The suffix is originally a compound of two PFU suffixes: abessive-caritive **-ktA + *-mA*. The variants without *v* occur after a consonant. This suffix is used in many FU languages in caritive adjectives (cf. Finnish *-tOn : -ttOmA-*, e.g. *auto-ttoma-t car-CAR-PL* 'the carless ones'). In the Mordvin languages it functions both as a case ending and as a derivative suffix. It expresses manner, e.g. *мон сонзе ёжо-втомo вечк-са* I he.GEN sense-ABE love-1SG>3SG 'I love him/her madly', *ёжо-втомo ломань sense-ABE man* 'a mad person'. It is rather difficult to find examples where this form would indisputably function as a case ending. Therefore one could argue that *-втомo* is a derivative suffix making adjectives and adverbs of nouns.

INDEFINITE DECLENSION, PLURAL

In the indefinite declension the opposition singular : plural is neutralized in all cases except the nominative, i. e. there is only one plural form, namely the nominative. The plural suffix is *-т, -ть* and it goes back to PFU. E. g. *кудо-т house-PL, веле-ть village-PL*.

Case paradigms, examples

(Эрзянь кель. Морфология. Саранск 2000, 79.)

веле 'village'			тумо 'oak'			вирь 'forest'			кал 'fish'		
Ном.	<i>веле</i>		<i>тумо</i>			Ном.	<i>вирь</i>		<i>кал</i>		
Ген.	<i>веле-нь</i>		<i>тумо-нь</i>			Ген.	<i>вир-е-нь</i>		<i>кал-о-нь</i>		
Дат.	<i>веле-нень</i>		<i>тумо-нень</i>			Дат.	<i>вир-нень</i>		<i>кал-нэнь</i>		
Аблат.	<i>веле-де</i>		<i>тумо-до</i>			Аблат.	<i>вир-де</i>		<i>кал-до</i>		
Инес.	<i>веле-сэ</i>		<i>тумо-со</i>			Инес.	<i>вир-сэ</i>		<i>кал-со</i>		
Элат.	<i>веле-стэ</i>		<i>тумо-сто</i>			Элат.	<i>вирь-стэ</i>		<i>кал-сто</i>		
Иллат.	<i>веле-с</i>		<i>тумо-с</i>			Иллат.	<i>вирь-с</i>		<i>кал-с</i>		
Лат.	<i>веле-в</i>		—			Лат.	<i>вир-е-в</i>		—		
Пролат.	<i>веле-ва</i>		<i>тумо-ва</i>			Пролат.	<i>вирь-га</i>		<i>кал-га</i>		
Транслат.	<i>веле-кс</i>		<i>тумо-кс</i>			Транслат.	<i>вирь-кс</i>		<i>кал-кс</i>		
Комп.	<i>веле-шка</i>		<i>тумо-шка</i>			Комп.	<i>вирь-шка</i>		<i>кал-шка</i>		
Абес.	<i>веле-втеме</i>		<i>тумо-втомо</i>			Абес.	<i>вир-теме</i>		<i>кал-томо</i>		

DEFINITE DECLENSION 1

The Mordvin languages have a definite declension. No research has been made on how definiteness in Mordvin can be defined. It does not always coincide with the use of, e. g., a definite article in English. The use of cases is not fully identical between the indefinite and definite declensions. I present now only the nominative forms of the definite declension,

because they occur already in the first texts. I shall give the full paradigms of the definite declension in singular and plural later.

In nominative singular the suffix of the definite declension is *-сь*. It goes back to the demonstrative pronoun *се* 'it' (cf. Finnish *se*). E. g. *кудо-сь* house : house-DEF, *веле-сь* village : village-DEF, *айгор-ось* stallion : stallion-DEF, *тейтер-есь* daughter : daughter-DEF.

In nominative plural the suffix of the definite declension is *-тне*. In the compound suffix *-т* is the normal plural ending and *-не* goes back to the demonstrative pronoun *не* 'these' (cf. Finnish *ne* 'those'). E.g. *кудо-т* : *кудо-тне* house-PL : house-PL.DEF, *веле-ть* : *веле-тне* village-PL : village-PL.DEF, *айгор-т* : *айгор-тне* stallion-PL : stallion-PL.DEF, *тейтер-ть* : *тейтер-тне* daughter-PL : daughter-PL.DEF.

VERBS

CONJUGATION OF VERBS, PRESENT TENSE

(Эрзянь кель. Морфология. Саранск 2000, 146.)

Verbs have three different stem types: a-, o- and e-stems, e.g. мора- 'to sing', вано- 'to watch', ниле- 'to swallow'. The o-/e- stems can in some forms drop their vowel and become consonantal (e.g. in the present tense in 1PL and 2PL). In the a-type the stem always ends in a vowel.

мора-мс 'to sing'	вано-мс 'to watch'	ниле-мс 'to swallow'
1SG мора-н	ван-ан	нил-ян
2SG мора-т	ван-ат	нил-ят
3SG мор-ы	ван-ы	нил-и
1PL мора-тано	ван-тано	ниль-тяно
2PL мора-тадо	ван-тано	ниль-тядо
3PL мор-ыть	ван-ыть	нил-ить

In 1SG and 2SG the suffixes go back to the corresponding PFU suffixes *-m and *-t.

In the 1PL and 2PL an extra syllable -та- occurs before the personal ending (it does not exist in other tenses). It is of obscure origin, perhaps the consonant goes back to the plural suffix -t. After that come the personal endings, in 1PL -но (in dialects also -nok), which is identical with the possessive suffix of the first person plural (< *-nmVk), and in 2PL -до, identical with the possessive suffix of the second person plural (< *-tVk). (Especially in the plural forms possessive suffixes and personal endings have merged or got mixed in many FU languages.

In the third persons there is historically no suffix expressing person. (A similar system has been postulated for PFU.) However, there is ы ~ и both in singular and in plural and it goes back to a derivative suffix *-jA (which is the suffix of nomen actoris or of a participle in some FU languages). NB Word-final dental consonants are always palatalized after [i] – even if [i] is written in the orthography with ы!

CONJUGATION OF VERBS, PRESENT TENSE, NEGATION

Mordvin uses a negative particle and a negative auxiliary. In present tense negation is expressed with the negative particle *a*: *a mopa-n* 'I do not sing', *a mopa-t* 'you don't sing' etc.

In predicative sentences the form *аволь* (< negative particle *a* + *уле-* 'to be') is used.

The negative existential is *арась* (etymology unknown).

CONJUGATION OF NOUNS, PRESENT TENSE

(Эрзянь кель. Морфология. Саранск 2000, 110.)

As noun predicates adjectives and nouns take the same personal suffixes as verbs with the exception of third persons. In 3SG there is no suffix and in 3PL only the plural suffix.

од 'young'

кудо-со house-INE

1SG од-ан 'I am young'

кудо-с-ан 'I am in the house'

2SG од-ат etc.

кудо-с-ат etc.

3SG од

кудо-со

1PL од-тано

кудо-с-тано

2PL од-тадо

кудо-с-тадо

3PL од-т

кудо-с-т

PERSONAL PRONOUNS, NOMINATIVE AND GENITIVE (later more...)

	Nom.	Gen.
1SG	мон	монь
2SG	тон	тонь
3SG	сон	сонзэ
1PL	минь	минек
2PL	тынь	тынк
3PL	сынъ	сынст

MORPHOLOGY 2

NUMERALS

(*Эрзянь кель. Морфология*. Саранск 2000, 116–118.)

Basic numbers 1–10, 100, 1000 etc. are etymological equivalents of the corresponding Finnish numerals. The word for 20 *комсь* etymologically corresponds to the Hungarian *húsz* and the Permic cognates. The form for 1000 is in the literary language *тёжа* but in dialects (and in Aasmäe's book) *тёжень* (~ *тёжань*); it is the same Baltic loanword as the Finnish *tuhat*. Nowadays also the Russian loanword *тыща* is used for 1000.

1 – вейке	7 – сисем	1000 – тёжа
2 – кавто	8 – кавксо	1000000 – миллион
3 – колмо	9 – вейксэ	
4 – ниле	10 – кемень	
5 – вете	20 – комсь	
6 – кото	100 – сядо	

The numerals 11–19 are compounds of *кемень* (with its shortened forms *ке-* or *кем-*) and the following numeral (*вейке*, *кавто*, etc.) with the suffix *-e* ~ *-во* ~ *-зе* (depending on the preceding vowels and consonants) which is of the same origin as the prolativ suffix. In some forms the word-initial consonant becomes voiced after the nasal and this is shown in the orthography too (*кемкавтово* → *кемгавтово*).

11 – кевейкее	14 – кемнилее	17 – кемзисемге
12 – кемгавтово	15 – кеветее	18 – кемгавксово
13 – кемголмово	16 – кемготово	19 – кевейксэ

The numerals 21–29 are compounds with *комсь* + the following numeral with the prolativ suffix.

21 – комсьвейкее	24 – комсьнилее	27 – комссисемге
22 – комськавтово	25 – комсьветее	28 – комськавксово
23 – комськолмово	26 – комськотово	29 – комсьвейксэ

The tens (following 10 and 20) are compounds of 3, 4, etc. + 10. In some cases the first numeral is in the genitive (30, 40, 80, 90), in others in the nominative (50, 60, 70). Note the assimilative processes (voiceless > voiced) of the stem-final consonant and the word-initial consonant, e.g. *вете*+*кемень* → *ведьгемень*!

30 – колоньгемень	70 – сизьгемень
40 – ниленьгемень	80 – кавксоньгемень
50 – ведьгемень	90 – вейксэньгемень
60 – кодгемень	

The numerals 21–99 are not written together but separately, e.g. *колоньгемень кавто* '32' etc.

In the literary languages hundreds are, however, written as compounds. The word *сядо* '100' is then in plural (> *садт*).

200 – кавтосядт	600 – котосядт
300 – колмосядт	700 – сисемзядт
400 – нилёсядт	800 – кавксосядт
500 – ветёсядт	900 – вейксэсядт

Unlike in many other Uralic languages the nouns in Mordvin take the plural after a numeral modifier, e.g. *колоньгемень кавто велеть* '32 villages', *тёжа ветесадт кодгемень колмо тумот* '1563 oaks'. However, in old dialect texts one can see also singular forms after numeral modifiers. If the numeral ends with *вейке* '1', the singular is obligatory, e.g. *колоньгемень вейке веле* '31 villages'.

Numerals are inflected like nouns:

Ном.	<i>колмо</i>	Ном.	<i>вете</i>
Ген.	<i>колмо-нь</i>	Ген.	<i>вете-нь</i>
Дат.	<i>колмо-нень</i>	Дат.	<i>вете-нень</i>
Аблат.	<i>колмо-до</i>	Аблат.	<i>вете-де</i>
Инес.	<i>колмо-со</i>	Инес.	<i>вете-сэ</i>
Элат.	<i>колмо-сто</i>	Элат.	<i>вете-стэ</i>
Иллат.	<i>колмо-с</i>	Иллат.	<i>вете-с</i>
Пролат.	<i>колмо-ва</i>	Пролат.	<i>вете-ва</i>
Транслат.	<i>колмо-кс</i>	Транслат.	<i>вете-кс</i>
Комп.	<i>колмо-шка</i>	Комп.	<i>вете-шка</i>
Абес.	<i>колмо-втомо</i>	Абес.	<i>вете-втеме</i>

MORPHOLOGY 3

Definite declension

Comparison

DEFINITE DECLENSION

In nominative singular the suffix of the definite declension is -сь. It goes back to the demonstrative pronoun се 'it' (cf. Finnish se). E. g. кудо : кудо-сь house : house-DEF, веле : веле-сь village : village-DEF, айгор : айгор-ось stallion : stallion-DEF, тейтерь : тейтер-есь daughter : daughter-DEF.

In nominative plural the suffix of the definite declension is -тне and after a non-palatalized consonant -тнэ. In the compound suffix -т is the normal plural ending and -не goes back to the demonstrative pronoun не 'these' (cf. Finnish ne 'those'). E.g. кудо-т : кудо-тне house-PL : house-PL.DEF, веле-ть : веле-тне village-PL : village-PL.DEF, айгор-т : айгор-тне stallion-PL : stallion-PL.DEF, тейтер-ть : тейтер-тне daughter-PL : daughter-PL.DEF, од-т : од-тнэ young-PL : young-PL.DEF.

In genitive singular (instead of -сь) the element -ть comes after the genitive suffix: -нтъ. -ть goes back to the demonstrative pronoun те 'this'. E. g. кудо-нтъ 'of the house', веле-нтъ 'of the village', айгор-онтъ 'of the stallion', тейтер-ентъ 'of the daughter'.

In all the other cases the suffix -нтъ is then used as a marker of definiteness. In ablative, inessive, elative, prolative, comparative and abessive the order of the suffixes is stem-CX-DEF. E. g. inessive кудо-со-нтъ 'in the house', prolative кудо-ва-нтъ 'through/along the house' etc. In dative the order is stem-DEF-CX, and the dative is also used for illative (dative=illative), e.g. кудо-нт-ень 'for the house' ~ 'in the house'. The lative and translative have no definite forms.

An indefinite object is usually in the nominative of indefinite declension, whereas a definite object is in the genitive(-accusative) of definite declension.

Case paradigms, definite declension singular, examples
(Эрзянь кель. Морфология. Саранск 2000, 106–107.)

пакся field веле village

Вейкенъ числа		
Ном.	<i>пакся-сь</i>	<i>веле-сь</i>
Ген.	<i>пакся-н-ть</i>	<i>веле-н-ть</i>
Дат.	<i>пакся-нт-ень</i>	<i>веле-нт-ень</i>
Аблат.	<i>пакся-до-нть</i>	<i>веле-де-нть</i>
Инес.	<i>пакся-со-нть</i>	<i>веле-сэ-нть</i>
Элат.	<i>пакся-сто-нть</i>	<i>веле-стэ-нть</i>
Иллат.	<i>пакся-нт-ень</i>	<i>веле-нт-ень</i>
Пролат.	<i>пакся-ва-нть</i>	<i>веле-ва-нть</i>
Транслат.	—	—
Комп.	<i>пакся-шка-нть</i>	<i>веле-шка-нть</i>
Абес.	<i>пакся-втомо-нть</i>	<i>веле-втеме-нть</i>

In plural the order of the suffixes is stem-PL.DEF-CX, e.g. кудо-тне-нь house-PL.DEF-GEN, кудо-т-не-нень house-PL.DEF-DAT.

Case paradigms, definite declension singular, examples
(Эрзянь кель. Морфология. Саранск 2000, 106–107.)

пакся field веле village

Ламонъ числа	
<i>пакся-т-не</i>	<i>веле-т-не</i>
<i>пакся-т-не-нь</i>	<i>веле-т-не-нь</i>
<i>пакся-т-не-нень</i>	<i>веле-т-не-нень</i>
<i>пакся-т-не-де</i>	<i>веле-т-не-де</i>
<i>пакся-т-не-сэ</i>	<i>веле-т-не-сэ</i>
<i>пакся-т-не-стэ</i>	<i>веле-т-не-стэ</i>
<i>пакся-т-не-с</i>	<i>веле-т-не-с</i>
<i>пакся-т-не-ва</i>	<i>веле-т-не-ва</i>
<i>пакся-т-не-кс</i>	<i>веле-т-не-кс</i>
<i>пакся-т-не-шка</i>	<i>веле-т-не-шка</i>
<i>пакся-т-не-втеме</i>	<i>веле-т-не-втеме</i>

COMPARISON

Comparative

Adjectives and adverbs do not have any morphological marker for degrees of comparison. Instead their basic form is used. The standard of comparison is indicated with the ablative case. E. g. пародо паросто good-ABL good-ELA 'better than well', тештеде валдо star-ABL white 'brighter than the star', сядодо ламо 100-ABL many 'more than hundred'. Often the emphatic particle -як / -рак / -как is added to the ablative form, e.g. пародояк паросто good-ABL good-ELA 'even better than well'. If the standard of comparison is not explicitly given, the ablative form of the pronoun се 'it' is used instead, e.g. седе покш кев it-ABL big stone 'a bigger stone'.

Superlative

Superlative is expressed with the help of particles сех / сехте or самай (all Russian loanwords) or with the ablative form of the pronoun весеме 'all'. E. g. сех / сехте / самай мазый моро 'the most beautiful song', весемеде мазый моро 'the most beautiful song'.

MORPHOLOGY 4

Conjugation of verbs: (simple) past tense (preterite)

Conjugation of nouns: past tense

Conjugation of verbs: II past tense

Infinitives -mc and -mo/-me; Future tense

Verbal nouns with -mo/-me and -ma

CONJUGATION: (SIMPLE) PAST TENSE (PRETERITE)

(Present tense, see Morphology 1)

The Mordvin languages use both old FU markers of past tense: **-j* and **-ś*. They are in complementary distribution: **-j* is used in the first and second persons and **-ś* in the third persons.

In the first and second persons singular **-j* changes the stem vowel into *i* (in orthography и / ы) after which the consonants of the personal ending are palatalized. E. g. содамс 'to know' : SG1 сод-ы-нь, SG2 сод-ы-ть, PL1 сод-ы-нек, PL2 сод-ы-де; меремс 'to say' : SG1 мер-и-нь, SG2 мер-и-ть, PL1 мер-и-нек, PL2 мер-и-де.

In the third person singular -сь and in plural -сть. In a-stems and stems with a consonant cluster in the beginning of the second syllable the stem vowel is preserved, whereas o- and e-stems with a single consonant drop the vowel before the preterite suffix. E. g. содамс 'to know' : SG3 сода-сь, PL3 сода-с-ть; касомс 'to grow' : SG3 кас-сь, PL3 кас-с-ть; ловномс 'to read' : SG3 ловно-сь, PL3 ловно-с-ть.

NB In the Cyrillic examples above the glossing hyphen blurs the palatalization of the sibilant, cf. in UPA soda-ś-t' etc.

Examples of paradigms: содамс 'to know' and меремс 'to say'

SG1 сод-ы-нь	SG1 мер-и-нь
SG2 сод-ы-ть	SG2 мер-и-ть
SG3 сода-сь	SG3 мер-сь
PL1 сод-ы-нек	PL1 мер-и-нек
PL2 сод-ы-де	PL2 мер-и-де
PL3 сода-с-ть	PL3 мер-с-ть

The verb улемс 'to be' is not used in the past tense as such. Instead a form with the frequentative-continuous derivative suffix -н- (ульнемс) is used:

SG1 уль-н-и-нь
SG2 уль-н-и-ть
SG3 уль-н-е-сь
PL1 уль-н-и-нек
PL2 уль-н-и-де
PL3 уль-н-е-с-ть

CONJUGATION OF NOUNS: PAST TENSE (PRETERITE)
(Present tense, see Morphology 1)

In the past tense forms of noun predicates the verb to be уле- is suffixed after the noun stem. In this process the initial vowel of the verb у- changes into -о- or -е- according to vowel harmony. уле- is in the past tense form, but in the third persons there is no suffix of past tense to be seen.

	од 'young'		веле-сэ 'in a village'
SG1	од-ол-и-нь 'I was young'		веле-сэ-л-и-нь 'I was in a village'
SG2	од-ол-и-ть etc.		веле-сэ-л-и-ть etc.
SG3	од-оль		веле-сэ-ль
PL1	од-ол-и-нек		веле-сэ-л-и-нек
PL2	од-ол-и-де		веле-сэ-л-и-де
PL3	од-оль-ть*		веле-сэ-ль-ть

	студент 'student'		ко-со 'where'
SG1	студент-эл-и-нь 'I was a student'		ко-со-л-и-нь 'where was I?'
SG2	студент-эл-и-ть etc.		ко-со-л-и-ть etc.
SG3	студент-эль		ко-со-ль
PL1	студент-эл-и-нек		ко-со-л-и-нек
PL2	студент-эл-и-де		ко-со-л-и-де
PL3	студент-эль-ть		ко-со-ль-ть

*Note that in the PL3 forms the palatalization of the л before the plural suffix is indicated with ь. (Usually in such consonant clusters palatalization is indicated only after the last consonant.)

One can also express past tense in nominal predication by using the verb 'to be'. According to Nina Aasmäe these constructions are in free variation, if the action described is continuous, but if the action is repeated (frequentative) the construction with ульне- is used. E.g.

мон ульнинь тосо	~	тосолинь 'I was there'
тон ульнить тосо	~	тосолить etc.
сон ульнесь тосо	~	тосоль
минь ульнинек тосо	~	тосолинек
тынь ульниде тосо	~	тосолиде
сынь ульнестъ тосо	~	тосольть

CONJUGATION: II PAST TENSE (PRETERITE)

I give here also the verbal paradigms for the II past tense, because its suffixes are almost identical to those of the conjugated nouns in the past tense; i.e. they go back to the verb уле-. In the II past tense уле- loses its initial vowel and comes the form of the present participle (which is identical to that of the SG3 of the present tense) ending in -и / -ы. The II past tense is not very frequent in texts because of its semantic restrictions: it expresses habitual action in the past.

E. g. морамс 'to sing'

SG1 моры-линь 'I used to sing, I had a habit of singing'

SG2 моры-лить etc.

SG3 моры-ль

PL1 моры-линек

PL2 моры-лиде

PL3 моры-льть

TWO INFINITIVES

The dictionary form of verbs has the infinitive suffix -мс, which joins the derivative suffix -мо / -ме (corresponding to the Finnish infinitive with *-mA) and the illative suffix -с.

There is also another infinitive with -мо / -ме but without the illative suffix.

Verbs which take the infinitive -мс as their subject are эряви 'is necessary, must' and саты 'is enough'. E.g. симемс эряви 'it is obligatory to drink', саты тетъ симемс 'it is enough for you to drink'. It is also used in predicative phrases like мезе теемс 'what to do', ули мезе ярсамс 'there is something to eat', арась мезе ярсамс 'there is nothing to eat', шка молемс 'it is time to go', стака морамс 'it is difficult to sing'. The infinitive with -мо / -ме is used as an object for verbs like кармамс 'to begin (doing something)', молемс 'to go', самс 'to come', маштомс 'to know how to', тонадомс 'to get used to'. E.g. кармась морамо 's/he started to sing', маштан морамо 'I know how to sing'.

FUTURE TENSE

The so-called future tense in Erzya is a fairly recent formation. It is formed with the auxiliary кармамс. So карман морамо can mean either 'I start to sing' or 'I shall sing' etc.

VERBAL NOUNS WITH -МО / -МЕ AND -МА

The suffix -мо / -ме is also used as an absolutely productive derivative suffix of verbal nouns. In verbal nouns it also has the variant -ма. E.g. морамо 'singing', киштема 'dancing, dance', вечкема 'loving, love'.

MORPHOLOGY 5

Possessive suffixes

POSSESSIVE SUFFIXES (POSSESSIVE DECLENSION)

(Aasmäe: Kortatano erzaks. 2012, 71–76.)

Possessive suffixes indicate the person and number of the possessor and in the first and third person singular nominative also the number (singular – plural) of the thing possessed. (In some Erzyan dialects the distinction between singular and plural possessed can be made in other persons and cases, too.) Historically the possessive suffixes go back to PFU ones.

The possessive suffixes can also indicate the person of the subject (or in some cases of the object) in infinitival structures.

Possessive suffixes in singular, possessed in singular/plural ,
possessed referent a) in singular, b) in plural

a)	МОНЬ 'my' -М	ТОНЬ 'your' -Т/-ТЬ	СОНЗЭ 'his/her' -ЗО/-ЗЭ
b)	МОНЬ 'my' -Н/-НЬ	ТОНЬ 'your' -Т/-ТЬ	СОНЗЭ 'his/her' -НЗО/-НЗЭ

History: PX1SG -М < *-mV¹, PX2SG -Т/-ТЬ < *-tV, PX3SG -ЗО/-ЗЭ < *-sV,
PX1SG.PL -Н/-НЬ < *-n-mV, PX1SG -Т/-ТЬ < *-tV, PX3SG.PL -НЗО/-НЗЭ < *-n-sV.

Mordvin has thus partly preserved the old PFU system of possessives suffixes where *-n- (before the person marker) indicates the plurality of the possessed thing. In other FU languages and also in Mordvin (see below) these forms are found as relics, cf. Fi. talo-nsa 'his/her house/s'.

Possessive suffixes in singular, possessed in singular/plural,

МИНЕК 'our' -НОК/-НЕК	ТЫНК 'your' -НК	СЫНСТ 'their' -СТ
--------------------------	--------------------	----------------------

History: PX1PL -НОК/-НЕК < *-n-mVk, PX2PL -НК < *-n-tVk, PX3PL -СТ < *-st < *-sVk.

Examples

сур 'finger', кедь 'hand', сельме 'eye'

Possessor and possessed in singular

-М	-Т/-ТЬ	-ЗО/-ЗЭ
суром	сурот	сурозо
кедем	кедеть	кедезэ
сельмем	сельметь	сельмезэ

Possessor in singular, possessed in plural

-Н/-НЬ	-Т/-ТЬ	-НЗО/-НЗЭ
сурон	сурот	суронзо
кедень	кедеть	кедензэ

¹ Unidentified vowel.

сельмем	сельметь	сельмензэ
Possessor in plural (possessed either in plural or singular)		
-нок/-нек	-нк	-ст
сунонок	суронк	сурост
кеденек	кеденк	кедест
сельменек	сельменк	сельмест

Notice the difference of the number expressed with possessive suffixes:

'I have/don't have a friend.'

Монь ули/арась ялгам.

Тонь ули/арась ялгат.

Сонзэ ули/арась ялгазо.

Минек ули/арась ялганок.

Тынк ули/арась ялганк.

Сынст ули/арась ялгаст.

'I have/don't have friends.'

Монь улить/арасть ялган.

Тонь улить/арасть ялгат.

Сонзэ улить/арасть ялганзо.

Минек улить/арасть ялганок.

Тынк улить/арасть ялганк.

Сынст улить/арасть ялгаст.

Nouns in possessive declension have eight cases: nominative, ablative, inessive, elative, illative, prolativ, comparative and abessive. **Words denoting kinship** take only **three case suffixes**: nominative, genitive and dative and only with the possessors of **SG1–3** монь/тонь/сонзэ, whereas **PL1–3** минек/тынк/сынст only have a nominative form. The suffix of the SG3 -зо/-зэ is used only in nominative. In all other cases the form -нзо/-нзэ is used.

Forms in the possessive declension

stem + case suffix + possessive suffix

	МОНЬ	ТОНЬ	СОНЗЭ	МИНЕК	ТЫНК	СЫНСТ
Nom.	.SG: -м	-т/-ть	-зо/-зэ	-нок/-нек	-нк	-ст
	.PL: -н/-нь	-т/-ть	-нзо/-нзэ	-нок/-нек	-нк	-ст
Gen.	-нь	-ть	-нзо/-нзэ	—	—	—
Dat.	-нень	-тень	-нстэнь	—	—	—

Abl.	-дом, -н	-дот	-донзо	-донок	-донк	-дост
	-дем, -нь	-деть	-дензэ	-денек	-денк	-дест
	-дэм, -нь	-дэть	-дэнзэ	-дэнек	-дэнк	-дэст
	-том, -н	-тот	-тонзо	-тонок	-тонк	-тост
	-тем, -нь	-тетъ	-тензэ	-тенек	-тенк	-тест
	-тэм, -нь	-тэть	-тэнзэ	-тэнек	-тэнк	-тэст
Iness.	-сом, -н	-сот	-сонзо	-сонок	-сонк	-сост
	-сэм, -нь	-сэть	-сэнзэ	-сэнек	-сэнк	-сэст
Elat.	-стом, -н	-стот	-стонзо	-стонок	-стонк	-стост
	-стэм, -нь	-стэть	-стэнзэ	-стэнек	-стэнк	-стэст
Ill.	(с > з)					
	-зом, -н	-зот	-зонзо	-зонок	-зонк	-зост
	-зэм, -нь	-зэть	-зэнзэ	-зэнек	-зэнк	-зэст
Prol.	-вам, -н	-ват	-ванзо	-ванок	-ванк	-васт
	-гам, -н	-гат	-ганзо	-ганок	-ганк	-гаст

	-кам, -н	-кат	-канзо	-канок	-канк	-каст
Comp.	-шкам, -н	-шкат	-шканзо	-шканок	-шканк	-шкаст
Abess..	-втомом, -н	-втомот	втомонзо	-втомонок	-втомонк	-втомост
	-втемем, -нъ	-втеметь	-втемензэ	-втеменек	-втеменк	-втемест
	-томом, -н	-томот	томонзо	-томонок	-томонк	-томоост
	-темем, -нъ	-теметь	-темензэ	-теменек	-теменк	-темест
	-тэемем, -нъ	-тэемень	-тэмензэ	-тэменек	-тэменк	-тэмест

Examples

пря 'head', пиле 'ear'

	монь	тонь	сонзэ	минек	тынк	сынст
Именит.	пря пилем, -нъ	прят пилеть	прязо пилезэ, -нзэ	прянок пиленек	прянк пиленк	пряст пилест
Abl.	прядом пиледем, -нъ	прядот пиледеть	прядонзо пиледензэ	прядонок пиледенек	прядонк пиледенк	прядост пиледест
Iness.	прясом пилесэм, -нъ	прясот пилесэть	прясонзо пилесэнзэ	прясонек пилесэнек	прясонк пилесэнк	прясост пилесэст
Elat.	прястом пилестэм, - нъ	прястот пилестэть	прястонзо пилестэнзэ	прястонок пилестэнек	прястонк пилестэнк	прястост пилестэст
Ill..	прязом пилезэм, -нъ	прязот пилезэть	прязонзо пилезэнзэ	прязонек пилезэнек	прязонк пилезэнк	прязост пилезэст
Prol.	прявам пилевам, -нъ	пряват пилевать	пряванзо пилеванзо	пряванок пилеванок	пряванк пилеванк	прываст пилеваст

Kinship terms

сазор 'younger sister', тейтерь 'daughter'

монь	тонь	сонзэ	минек	тынк	сынст
сазором, -н тейтерем, -нъ	сазорот тейтереть	сазорозо, -нзо тейтерезэ, -нзэ	сазоронек тейтеренек	сазоронк тейтеренк	сазорост тейтерест
сазоронь тейтерень	сазороть тейтереть	сазоронзо тейтерензэ			
сазоронень тейтеренень	сазоротень тейтеретень	сазоронстэнь тейтеренстэнь			

Possessive suffixes are used with postpositions without the corresponding pronoun, e.g. мапто-м, -т, -нзо, -нок, -нк, -ст 'with me, with you, etc.'

As can be seen in the texts (Texts 6), suffixes of the definite declension can be used instead of the possessive suffixes. Cf. цѣра-нтъ сазоро-нзо son-GEN.DEF sister-PX3SG.PL 'younger sisters of the son' but цѣра-нъ ни-нтень son-GEN wife-DAT.DEF 'to son's wife'.

MORPHOLOGY 6

Past tense: negation

Imperative

Present participle

Copulative compounds (dvandvas)

Abstract nouns

NEGATION OF THE PAST TENSE

(Aasmäe 2012: 82–83.)

In Erzya some tenses and moods take a negative particle and some a negative auxiliary. The negative particle is used with the present tense (see Morphology 1) and also with the second past tense (see Morphology 4), whereas the first past tense takes the negative auxiliary. Its stem is эзь- (which goes back to the Uralic negative verb):

эз-и-нь, эз-и-ть, эзь (~ эсь), эз-и-нек, эз-и-де, эз-ть (и < *j of the past tense).

The connegative form of the main verb is the bare stem.

1. past tense	
Affirmative	Negative
туинь, сынъ	эзинъ тые, эзинъ са
туить, сыть	эзить тые, эзить са
тусь, сась	эзь тые, эзь са
туинек, сынек	эзинек тые, эзинек са
туиде, сыде	эзиде тые, эзиде са
тусть, састъ	эзть тые, эзть са

Examples тыемс 'to go', самс 'to come'.

When negated in the 1. past tense, instead of улемс 'to be' the form ульне- (with the frequentative suffix -не- is used):

Эзинъ ульне тосо. 'I was not there.' (Fi. 'Minä en ollut siellä.')

Эзить ульне тосо.

Эзь ульне тосо.

Эзинек ульне тосо.

Эзиде ульне тосо.

Эзть ульне тосо.

One can also use the conjugation of nouns: мон а тосо-л-и-нь etc. 'I was not there.' (Fi. 'Minä en ollut siellä.')

When stressing the existential nature of the verb the negative existential арась is used and conjugated in the past tense:

Мон араселинь тосо. 'I was not there/I was absent.' (Fi. 'Minua ei ollut siellä.')

Тон араселить тосо.

Сон арасель тосо.

Минь араселинек тосо.

Тынь араселиде тосо.

Сынь арасельть тосо.

IMPERATIVE

(Aasmäe 2012: 84.)

The Mordvin imperative is only conjugated in the second persons. In the singular the PFU suffix *-k > -к is used. If it comes after a consonant (in o/e-stems without a preceding consonant cluster), it changes into -т, -ть whereas in plural there is no suffix except for the personal ending -до, -де.

The negative verb has a different stem in the imperative: иля(-).

Affirmative		Negative (иля, илядо) + connegative
-к, -до/-де;	-т/-ть, -до/-де	
морамс: мора-к, -до	ваномс: ван-т, -о-до	морамс: иля, -до мора
ярсамс: ярса-к, -до	ловомс: лов-т, -о-до	кортамс: иля, -до корта
совамс: сова-к, -до	путомс: пут-т, -о-до	путомс: иля, -до путо
удомс: удо-к, -до	молемс: моль-ть, -е-	ваномс: иля, -до вано
учомс: учо-к, -до	де	саемс: иля, -до сае
ловномс: ловно-к, -до	симемс: сим-ть, -е-де	симемс: иля, -до симе
оймсемс: оймсе-к, -де	теемс: тей-ть, -е-де	вешемс: иля, -до веше
кортнемс: кортне-к, -де	саемс: сай-ть, -е-де	туемс: иля, -до туе
	вешемс: веш-ть, -е-	
	де	

ваномс 'to look at', вешемс 'to ask for', кортнемс 'to speak', ловомс 'to count', оймсемс 'to rest', путомс 'to put', совамс 'to go in', удомс 'to sleep', учомс 'to wait'

PRESENT PARTICIPLE

The basic form of the present participle is identical with the 3SG of the verb in present tense, i. e. it ends with -и/-ы (< *jA). For example, морамс to sing : моры one who is singing, ветямс to take, to lead : вети one who is leading, ваномс to look at : ваны one who is looking. The derivative suffix -ця can be added to the form, but it is optional and does not change the meaning of the participle. Many of the present participles are lexicalized and they function also as *nomen actoris*: морыця singer, ветиця leader, guide.

COPULATIVE COMPOUNDS (DVANDVAS)

Copulative compounds are very frequent in Mordvin and they appear in almost all word classes. Both parts of a compound are written together with a hyphen. For example, шачомс-касомс to be born and grow up, тетям-авам my parents (lit. my father-my mother), снярдо-снярдо sometimes (lit. when-when). In compound nouns some morphological element is used to combine the words together. In texts 7 it is most often a possessive suffix. Often the plural suffix is used in this function, for example, эрить атять-бабат an old man and an old woman live (= a typical phrase in the beginning of a fairy-tale). Many of the copulative compounds are lexicalized and express more than the sum of the both parts, for example сукст-унжат insects (lit. larvae-bugs).

ABSTRACT NOUNS

Adjectives can be used as nouns (as in any other Uralic languages, too), for example, стака hard; hardness. In modern literary language the suffix -чи changes adjectives into abstract nouns: вачо hungry > вачочи hunger, мазый beautiful > мазычи beauty. The derivative suffix -чи goes back to the noun чи sun; day (cf. the identical process in Komi: лун id. > -лун).

MORPHOLOGY 7

Definite or objective conjugation

DEFINITE OR OBJECTIVE CONJUGATION

Mordvin has a definite/objective conjugation. Its personal suffixes indicate both the person and number of the subject as well as those of the object. The suffixes originate from personal and possessive suffixes plus some pronominal elements (of demonstrative pronouns). (More information on the structure and etymology of the suffixes, see László Keresztes' book *Development of Mordvin definite conjugation* (MSFOu 233, 1999).) As the the suffixes in Erzya and Moksha are to some extent different, it is assumed that the objective conjugation has reached its current stage only after the common Proto-Mordvin period.

In principle, there could be altogether $6 \times 6 = 36$ forms, but fortunately, there are many homonymic forms, especially in plural. Furthermore, pragmatics make some forms impossible, e.g. 1SG>1SG, 2SG>2SG. Unfortunately, however, the suffixes differ in tenses and moods.

The definite conjugation is used when the object is definite, but also tense, aspect and Aktionsart can influence the choice of conjugation. If the object is a (personal) pronoun, it can be omitted and expressed solely with the suffixes of the definite conjugation. There are hardly any studies on definiteness in Mordvin. Therefore it is difficult to give a picture of the use of the objective conjugation in Mordvin. Compare the examples below:

Subjective (normal) conjugation, past tense	Definite conjugation, past tense
Сон морась моро. 'He sang a song.' Сон састынесть морась моро /моронть /моронзо. 'He was quietly singing a / the / his song.'	Сон морызе моронть / моронзо (паросто). 'He sang the / his song well.'
Сон марясь моро. 'He heard a song.'	Сон маризе моронть / моронзо. 'He heard the / his/her song.'

Suffixes of the definite conjugation in a) the present (and future) tense and b) in the past tense. Notice the overlapping forms (marked with grey colour) and the missing forms:

a)

S > O	монь me	тонь you	сонзэ him/her	минек us	тынк you	сынст them
МОН		-тан/-тян	-са		-тадызь/-тядызь	-сыннь
ТОН	-самак		-сак	-самизь		-сыть
СОН	-самам	-танзат/-тянзат	-сы	-самизь	-тадызь/-тядызь	-сынзе
МИНЬ		-тадызь/-тядызь	-сынек		-тадызь/-тядызь	-сынек
ТЫНЬ	-самизь		-сынк	-самизь		-сынк
СЫНЬ	-самизь	-тадызь/-тядызь	-сызь	-самизь	-тадызь/-тядызь	-сызь

b)

МОН		-ТИНЬ	-Я		-ДИЗЬ	-НЬ
ТОН	-МИК		-К	-МИЗЬ		-ТЬ
СОН	-МИМ	-НЗИТЬ	-ЗЕ	-МИЗЬ	-ДИЗЬ	-НЗЕ
МИНЬ		-ДИЗЬ	-НЕК		-ДИЗЬ	-НЕК
ТЫНЬ	- МИЗЬ		-НК	-МИЗЬ		-НК
СЫНЬ	-МИЗЬ	-ДИЗЬ	-ЗЬ	-МИЗЬ	-ДИЗЬ	-ЗЬ

Examples (учомс 'to wait', тердемс 'to call, to invite'):

a) Present tense

Subject	Object		
Мон	тонь	учотан /тердтян	I wait for/invite you
	сонзэ	учоса/тердьса	I wait for/invite him/her
	тынк	учотадызь/тердтядызь	I wait for/invite you (pl)
	сынст	учосынь/тердьсынь	I wait for/invite them
Тон	монь	учосамак/тердьсамак	You wait for/invite me
	сонзэ	учосак/тердьсак	You wait for/invite him/her
	минек	учосамизь/тердьсамизь	You wait for/invite us
	сынст	учосыть/тердьсыть	You wait for/invite them
Сон	монь	учосамам/тердьсамам	S/he waits for/invites me
	тонь	учотанзат/тердтянзат	S/he waits for/invites you
	сонзэ	учосы/тердьсы	S/he waits for/invites him/h
	минек	учосамизь/тердьсамизь	S/he waits for/invites us
	тынк	учотадызь/тердтядызь	S/he waits for/invites you
	сынст	учосынзе/тердьсынзе	S/he waits for/invites them
Минь	тонь	учотадызь/тердтядызь	We wait for/invite you
	сонзэ	учосынек/тердьсынек	We wait for/invite him/her
	тынк	учотадызь/тердтядызь	We wait for/invite you
	сынст	учосынек/тердьсынек	We wait for/invite them
Тынь	монь	учосамизь/тердьсамизь	You wait for/invite me
	сонзэ	учосынк/тердьсынк	You wait for/invite him/her
	минек	учосамизь/тердьсамизь	You wait for/invite us
	сынст	учосынк/тердьсынк	You wait for/invite them
Сынь	монь	учосамизь/тердьсамизь	They wait for/invite me
	тонь	учотадызь/тердтядызь	They wait for/invite you
	сонзэ	учосызь/тердьсызь	They wait for/invite him/he
	минек	учосамизь/тердьсамизь	They wait for/invite us
	тынк	учотадызь/тердтядызь	They wait for/invite you
	сынст	учосызь/тердьсызь	They wait for/invite them

b) Past tense

Subject	Object		
Мон	тонь	учитинь/тердитинь.	I waited for/invited you
	сонзэ	учия/тердия	I waited for/invited him/her
	тынк	учидизь/тердидизь	I waited for/invited you
	сынст	учинь/тердинь	I waited for/invited them
Тон	монь	учимик/тердимик	You waited for/invited me
	сонзэ	учик/тердик	You waited for/invited him/her
	минек	учимизь/тердимизь	You waited for/invited us
	сынст	учить/тердить	You waited for/invited them
Сон	монь	учимим/тердимим	S/he waited for/invited me
	тонь	учинзить/тердинзить	S/he waited for/invited you
	сонзэ	учизе/тердизе	S/he waited for/invited him/h
	минек	учимизь/тердимизь	S/he waited for/invited us
	тынк	учидизь/тердидизь	S/he waited for/invited you
	сынст	учинзе/тердинзе	S/he waited for/invited them
Минь	тонь	учидизь/тердидизь	We waited for/invited you
	сонзэ	учинек/тердинек	We waited for/invited him/h
	тынк	учидизь/тердидизь	We waited for/invited you
	сынст	учинек/тердинек	We waited for/invited them
Тынь	монь	учимизь/тердимизь	You waited for/invited me
	сонзэ	учинк/тердинк	You waited for/invited him/h
	минек	учимизь/тердимизь	You waited for/invited us
	сынст	учинк/тердинк	You waited for/invited them
Сынь	монь	учимизь/тердимизь	They waited for/invited me
	тонь	учидизь/тердидизь	They waited for/invited you
	сонзэ	учизь/тердизь	They waited for/invited him/h
	минек	учимизь/тердимизь	They waited for/invited us
	тынк	учидизь/тердидизь	They waited for/invited you
	сынст	учизь/тердизь	They waited for/invited them

In the present tense the negative particle *a* is used, e.g. *a cəpmadca cəpmanť* 'I shall not write the letter' (NB that because of the definite conjugation the tense has to be interpreted as future and not present tense), *a codatan* 'I do not know you'.

In the past tense the negative auxiliary *əz-* is used and it takes all the suffixes, whereas the main verb is in the connegative form, e.g. *əzia cəpmađo cəpmanť* 'I did not write the letter', *əzitinť soda* 'I did not know you'.

(Tables, see Aasmäe 2012: 65–67.)

MORPHOLOGY 8

Imperative, definite conjugation

Optative

Non-finite verb forms

Some derivative suffixes

IMPERATIVE, DEFINITE CONJUGATION

The suffixes of the definite conjugation in the imperative mood differ from those of the indicative. The subjects in the imperative can be only second persons, whereas objects include the first and third persons.

Paradigms with ветямс 'to take, to lead', учомс 'to wait', тердемс 'to invite' (NB the homonymous/overlapping forms):

Subject	Object	Affirmative	Negative
ТОН	МОНЬ	ветя-мак, учо-мак, терде-мак	иля-мак ветя, учо, терде
	МИНЕК	ветя-мизь, учо-мизь, терде-мизь	иля-мизь ветя, учо, терде
	СОНЗЭ	вети-к, учи-к, терди-к	или-к ветя, учо, терде
	СЫНСТ	вети-ть, учи-ть, терди-ть	или-ть ветя, учо, терде
ТЫНЬ	МОНЬ	ветя-мизь, учо-мизь, терде-мизь	иля-мизь ветя, учо, терде
	МИНЕК	ветя-мизь, учо-мизь, терде-мизь	иля-мизь ветя, учо, терде
	СОНЗЭ	вети-нк, учи-нк, терди-нк	или-нк ветя, учо, терде
	СЫНСТ	вети-нк, учи-нк, терди-нк	или-нк ветя, учо, терде

Examples:

Патяй, учомак, монгак молян кино. '(Older) sister, wait for me, I'll go to the cinema, too.'

Цёринем, ветить алашатнень симеме. 'My little boy, lead the horses to drink.'

Илямак терде – а молян, шкам арась. 'Don't invite me – I won't go, I don't have time.'

Илинк стувто саемс конёвtnень. 'Don't forget to take the papers.'

OPTATIVE

Mordvin has an optative mood. However, it does not occur very often in texts or speech. The suffix -з(o) originates from the possessive suffix of the 3SG. In the plural forms the з is pronounced voiceless, and in some grammars even written with an с. Optative expresses a wish, a request, not a direct command. The negative auxiliary used with the optative is the same as in the imperative (иля-). Some grammars give forms of definite conjugation also in the optative, but some deny the existence of such forms or find them very rare. (Cf. Bartens 1999: 139.) Below I give only the paradigm of the normal conjugation (but cf. Эрзянь кель. Морфология. Саранск 2000, 180–181.)

Paradigms with ветямс 'to take, to lead', учомс 'to wait'.

Subject		
1SG	ветя-з-ан, учо-з-ан	иля-з-ан ветя, учо
2SG	ветя-з-ат, учо-з-ат	иля-з-ат ветя, учо
3SG	ветя-зо, учо-зо	иля-з-о ветя, учо
1PL	ветя-з-тано, учо-з-тано	иля-з-тано ветя, учо
2PL	ветя-з-тадо, учо-з-тадо	иля-з-тадо ветя, учо
3PL	ветя-з-т, учо-з-т	иля-з-т ветя, учо

Examples: учо-зо 'let him wait', учо-з-тано 'let us wait'.

NON-FINITE FORMS

The present participle was presented in Morphology 6 and the infinitives -мо and -мс in Morphology 4. The present participle is negated with the negative particle а: тонавтниця эйкакш 'a child who is not studying'. There are also several other non-finite forms in Mordvin.

The third **infinitive** -м(о)до/-м(е)де/-мадо is actually an ablative of the infinitive and it is used with verbs that govern a "from" case (like ablative, elative, separative). In the Uralic languages such verbs are, to fear, to avoid, to deny, to refuse, to be ashamed, etc., e.g. седе малав молемадо пелинь 'I was afraid of going nearer'.

Erzya has two past tense participles with different suffixes: -зь (cf. Permic participle suffix -ысь) and -вт. The **past participle** with -зь can be active or passive depending on the verb (intransitive>active, transitive>passive): паросто сёрмадозь сёрма 'a well written letter', сизезь ломань 'a tired person'. The -зь- participle can also function as a predicate: модась соказь 'the land has been ploughed'; this is a productive way of expressing passive.

The **past participle** with -вт is used when the agent of the action is expressed with a modifier (attribute) in genitive (cf. the Finnish *agenttipartisiippi*), e.g. авань ёравт кши 'bread baked by mother'. (Instead of these two participles, Moksha uses only -ф ~ Е -вт in both functions.)

Both past participles are negated with a special form of the **negative** auxiliary апак + the connegative form of the main verb (NB not the participle!): апак сёрмадо сёрма 'an unwritten letter, a letter that was never written'.

There is a participle with the suffix -викс, originally a translative of the very productive reflexive-passive derivative suffix -в-. -викс can be seen in a few lexicalized words which are very frequent, e.g. вечкевикс ялгат 'esteemed/beloved friends' (вечкево- 'to be loved' < вечке- 'to love').

The **passive-necessitive participle** with the suffix -ма (called infinitive-participle by Paasonen and some other grammarians) is used both as a modifier (attribute), e.g. максома тейтерь 'a girl who has to be married' (lit. who has to be given), and as a predicate with the agent in dative, e.g. ванды тонеть вирев молема 'tomorrow you have to go to forest', исяк монень молемаль вирев 'yesterday I had to go to forest'. (Bartens 1999, 151–152.)

The most frequent **gerund** takes the same suffix -зь and expresses manner: молинек вирев моразь 'we went to forest singing', молинек вирев апак мора 'we went to forest not singing'.

The **gerund of simultaneous action** is marked with the suffix **-мсто/-мстэ** (= elative of the infinitive; elative is used to indicate point of time), e.g. Вирев молемстэ минь морынек. 'We sang while going to the forest.' The agent of the action can be expressed with the help of possessive suffixes, e.g. ловномстонок 'while we are/were reading'.

The **gerund -мга** (= prolative of the infinitive) expresses **cause**, e.g. тейтерь вечкемга лиссь мирденень 'the girl married ("went to a man") out of love'.

The gerund suffix **-до** is mentioned in most grammars, although it is totally unproductive and seems to occur only with the verb озамс 'to sit', озадо 'sitting' (manner).

SOME DERIVATIVE SUFFIXES

The Mordvin languages use **deminutive suffixes** very frequently, even without the referent being small. The most productive deminutive suffixes are **-не** and **-ка**, e.g. кудо – кудыне 'house – small house', веле – велине 'village – (small) village', вишка – вишкине 'small – tiny', тейтерь – тейтерька 'girl – (little) girl', сазор – сазорка 'younger sister – little sister'.

The verbal derivation in Mordvin is very rich. **-вт** (< *kt) is a causative suffix, e.g. якамс – якавтомс 'to go – to make somebody go', морамс – моравтомс 'to sing – to make somebody sing'.

The reflexive-passive **-в** (< *w) is extremely productive, e.g. малямс – малявомс 'to hear/feel – to seem', морамс – моравомс 'to sing – to be/get sung', путомс – путовомс 'to put – to be put'. The derived verbs with **в** are often used as nonpersonal or passive sentences (without an agent).

The frequentative **-не, -но** is also very frequent, starting from the verb 'to be' (уле- – ульне-) where there is no change in meaning, e.g. ёвтамс – ёвтнемс 'to say – to tell', молямс – молнемс 'to go – to go (frequ.)'.

MORPHOLOGY 9

Conditional

Conjunctive

Conditional-conjunctive

Desiderative

Declination of personal pronouns

CONDITIONAL MOOD

Mordvin is rich in moods. Apart from the earlier represented imperative and optative, there is a conditional, a conjunctive, a conditional-conjunctive and a desiderative.

The suffix of the conditional is -дер(я)- and it originates from an independent verb *теря(втомс)* 'to try'. The conditional is used in subordinate clauses and it expresses the condition on which an action will happen or a state is possible. No conjunction 'if' is used in the subordinate clause, because the mood itself expresses the condition. The verb in the main clause appears in the present tense. E. g. *Улиндеряй* шкам, молян велев. 'If I have time, I (shall) go to the country.' *Вешиндерят* тев, свал муят. 'If you search for work, you will find (it).'

Paradigms

a) subjective conjugation: *ярсамс* 'to eat', *симемс* 'to drink'; b) objective conjugation: *морамс* 'to sing', *сэвемс* 'to eat (up)' (object – *сонзэ* 'him/her/it')

	а) ярсинь-деря-	симинь-деря-	б) морынь-деря-	сэвинь-деря-
Мон	ярсиндеря-н	симиндеря-н	морындеря-са	сэвиндеря-са
Тон	ярсиндеря-т	симиндеря-т	морындеря-сак	сэвиндеря-сак
Сон	ярсиндеря-й	симиндеря-й	морындеря-сы	сэвиндеря-сы
Минь	ярсиндеря-тано	симиндеря-тано	морындеря-сынек	сэвиндеря-сынек
Тынь	ярсиндеря-тадо	симиндеря-тадо	морындеря-сынк	сэвиндеря-сынк
Сынь	ярсиндеря-йть	симиндеря-йть	морындеря-сызь	сэвиндеря-сызь

The personal suffixes used the conditional are identical with the ones used in the indicative present tense. The -н- between the stem and the suffix is etymologically unclear. In some dialects one can find forms, where the personal ending comes before the element -деря-й, e.g. *паландеряй* 'if I kiss', *палатдеряй* 'if you kiss', etc.

The conditional is negated with the negative particle *a*: *a ярсиндерян* 'if I don't eat', etc.

Examples

Молиндерян Саранов, *сован* Степан Эрзянь *лемсэ* галереяс.

'If I go to Saransk, I shall go the gallery named after Stepan Erzya.'

Неиндеряса, *кортан* *мартонзо*. 'If I see him/her, I'll talk with him/her.'

А саиньдерят *ярсамопель* / *а саиньдерясак* *ярсамопеленть* *мартот* – *аштят* *вачопеке*.

'If you don't take any food / the food along, you'll end up hungry.'

CONJUNCTIVE MOOD

The conjunctive expresses an action or state which the speaker considers counterfactual, i.e. unreal or unlikely to take place; conjunctive forms often express the speaker's desire. The conjunctive marker is the suffix -в(о)ль-/ -в(е)ль- (< уле- 'to be', where u->-v-). The conjunctive roughly corresponds to English *would*. E.g. Молев**лине**к велев. 'We would like to go to the country.'

Paradigms

a) subjective conjugation: ярсамс 'to eat', симемс 'to drink'; b) objective conjugation: морамс 'to sing', сэвемс 'to eat (up)' (object – сонзэ 'him/her/it').

	а) ярса-в(о)ль-	симе- в(е)ль-	б) мора-вл-	сэве-вл-
Мон	ярсавл-инь	симевл-инь	моравл-ия	сэвевл-ия
Тон	ярсавл-ить	симевл-ить	моравл-ик	сэвевл-ик
Сон	ярсаволь	симевель	моравл-изе	сэвевл-изе
Минь	ярсавл-инек	симевл-инек	моравл-инек	сэвевл-инек
Тынь	ярсавл-иде	симевл-иде	моравл-инк	сэвевл-инк
Сынь	ярсаволь-ть	симевель-ть	моравл-изь	сэвевл-изь

The personal suffixes used in the conjunctive are identical with the ones used in the indicative past tense.

The conjunctive mood can be negated in two ways: either by using the negative particle а and conjugating the main verb, or by conjugating the negative form аволь in the conjunctive mood and the main verb in a connegative form, e.g. аволинь, аволить, аволь, аволинек, аволиде, авольть ярса; аволия, аволик, аволизе, аволинек, аволинк, аволизь сэве.

Examples

Молевлинь Саранов – совавлинь Степан Эрзянь лемсэ галереяс.

'If I went to Saransk, I would visit the Stepan Erzya gallery.'

Неевлия – кортавлинь мартонзо.

'If I saw him/her, I would talk with him/her.'

А саевлитель/аволить сае ярсамопель мартот – аштевлить вачопеке.

'If you didn't take any food along, you would end up hungry.'

А саевлик/аволик сае ярсамопеленть мартот – аштевлить вачопеке.

'If you didn't take the food along, you would end up hungry.'

CONDITIONAL-CONJUNCTIVE

The conditional-conjunctive expresses an irreal action or state, which is a precondition for another irreal action or state, which could have happened in the past. The conditional-conjunctive is formed by adding the suffix of the conjunctive after the suffix of the conditional. Conditional-conjunctive is negated with the particle а.

Examples

Улиндер**яв**литель тон ломань – пелензэ царствам максовлия тетъ.

'If you had been a human being, I would have given you half of my kingdom.'

Ёмавтын**деряв**лик тейтереть, кармавлинь мартот эрямо.

'If you had killed your daughter, I would have started to live with you.'

DESIDERATIVE

Desiderative expresses action somebody wanted to do in the past. Its structure is: stem + present participle (short form) + translative + the verb уле- 'to be' + the personal suffixes of the past tense, e.g. морыксэлинь 'I wanted to sing' (lit. I was to [become] a singer), Ловняське а лисиксэль улыцяв 'Snow-white did not want to go out'. Instead of the negative particle а the desiderative can also be negated with аволь in the desiderative mood, e.g. а морыксэлинь ~ авольксэлинь мора.

DECLINATION OF PERSONAL PRONOUNS

	SG 1	2	3
Nom.	мон	тон	сон
Gen.	монь	тонь	сонзэ
Dat.	монень	тонеть	сонензэ
Abl.	мондень	тондеть	сондензэ
Iness.	моньсэнь	тоньсэть	соньсэнзэ
Elat.	моньстэнь	тоньстэть	соньстэнзэ
Ill.	моньзэнь	тоньзэть	соньзэнзэ
Prol.	моньган	тоньгат	соньганзо
Transl.	моньксэнь	тоньксэть	соньксэнзэ
Comp.	моньшкан	тоньшкат	соньшканзо
Abess.	монтемень	тонтеметь	сонтемензэ

	PL 1	2	3
Nom.	минь	тынь	сынь
Gen.	минек	тынк	сынст
Dat.	миненек	тыненк	сыненст
Abl.	минденек	тынденк	сындест
Iness.	миньсэнек	тыньсэнк	сыньсэст
Elat.	миньстэнек	тыньстэнк	сыньстэст
Ill.	миньзэнек	тыньзэнк	сыньзэст
Prol.	миньганок	тыньганк	сыньгаст
Transl.	миньксэнек	тыньксэнк	сыньксэст
Comp.	миньшканок	тыньшканк	сыньшкаст
Abess.	минтеменек	тынтеменк	сынтемест

Most of the forms take the corresponding possessive suffix after the case ending.

With postpositions personal pronouns are not needed, because the person is indicated with possessive suffixes. E. g. кармавлинь мартот эрямо 'I would start to live with you'.

Instead of the dative form of the personal pronoun the postposition те(й)- is used, e.g. тень 'to me', тетъ 'to you', тензэ 'to him/her' etc.

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