

**The opposition of *avoldams* 'to wave off'
and *dakśńiems* 'to agree'**

(On the aspectual nature of position and negation in Erza-Mordvinian)

0. In an earlier paper of mine (Simoncsics 2004) I have tried to show how gestures and language interplay in expressing affirmation (~ consent, agreement) and negation in substandard Hungarian. In this paper I am trying to describe a reverse phenomenon in Mordvinian, namely, how negation of logico-linguistical nature may turn into expressions of reference and/or description.

1. The general word for negation in Erza-Mordvinian is *avol'*. The form, in its turn, is a compound of the negative particle *a* (*at*) of Indo-European origin and the root of the existential verb *ul'*- (< *ul'ems*).

2. The general word for affirmation (~ consent, agreement) in E (and in M as well) is *da* which is a Russian loanword.

3. Both negation word *avol'* and word of affirmation *da* do serve also as bases for verbal derivation.

3.1.1. *avoldams* (variants: *auldams*, *aχuldams*) 'to wave off (e.g. a fly); to wave once; to wipe out' (e.g. *p'raso avoldams* 'to wave with one's head') < *avol*[']=*da*- ≈ 'not ∧ verbal suffix expressing perfectivity'.

3.1.2. *avol'ams* 'to wave continuously, to gesticulate' (e.g. *ked'se avol'ams* 'to wave with one's hand') < *avol'*⇒*a*- ≈ 'not ∧ verbal suffix expressing continuity'.

3.2. *dakšněms* ‘to agree, to concede; saying/gesturing *yes* repeatedly’ < *da=kšně* ≈ ‘yes ∧ verbal suffix of frequentativity-continuity (expressing also repeated interruption of action)’.

4. The opposition of meanings ‘perfectivity’ and ‘frequentativity’ as expressed by derivative suffixes *=da* and *≠kšně* attached to the bases *avol*[-] and *da-*, respectively, reveal and reinforce the – possibly universal – aspectual difference between negation and affirmation (~ consent, agreement), namely: negation is a single gesture in contradistinction to affirmation (~ consent, agreement) which is characterized by repetition.

5. *avol’ams*, on the other hand, another derived form of negation word *avol’*, had lost its force of negation through the application of the frequentativity-continuity suffix *=a* and became a “normal” verb describing everyday action (gesticulation) with no specific function concerning the logical value of the message.

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