

Is the “-msto/-mste” formant in Erzya anything more than a deverbal noun in the elative?

(Research in progress)

Studies of the Erzya language often speak of a gerund in the form “-msto/-mste”, derived regularly from verb stems in much the same way as the “-ms” illative infinitive. Most recently Alyoshkina (2000: 222-227) has enumerated the gerunds in Erzya to comprise the three forms “-ž”, “-msto/-mste” and “-do”. Of these three so-called gerunds only the first two are regularly and extensively derived from verb stems. The “-msto/-mste” forms are used to express the temporal frame of a non-matrix event/action/state entity, and they are used adjunctively. Below is an example transliterated and translated from one of the examples provided by Alyoshkina in her treatise of gerunds in the Morfologiya 2000 grammar of Erzya.

(Alyokshina 2000: 223 “Grigoshin”)

<i>čĭ+ńt'</i>	<i>valgo+m+sto</i>	<i>čokšńe+ń</i>	<i>zońa+ś</i>
sun_N+GEN+DET+SG	to-set_V+N+ELA	evening_N+GEN	redness-in-the-sky_N+NOM.DET.SG
<i>veše</i>	<i>olakad+ś</i>		
completely _ADV	to-turn-pale_V+PRET.I.PRED-3SG		

‘As the sun set the redness in the evening sky became entirely pale.’

If we were to examine the word “*valgo+m+sto*” in the example above as a verbal form with no corresponding derivational counterparts in nominal inflection, we might also parse this word form as “*valgo+msto*” to-set_V-INF-ELA. The problem is that there are, indeed, counterparts to both the morphological “-sto/-ste” elative inflection and the semantic temporal usage in the nominal class. In fact, there is not anything other than tradition that differentiates this elative-form gerund from the composed semantics of its homophone the elative-form deverbal noun.

Criteria for establishing status of the phenomenon on the basis of literary text corpora of the Erzya language:

- (1) The basic deverbal form will be investigated morphologically for the absence and presence of a vowel “-msto/-mste” versus “-mosto/-masto/-meste”;
- (2) the form will be assessed for compatibility with the three nominal declination types, i.e. indeterminate, determinate and possessive declination, and
- (3) the form will be assessed for compatibility with modifiers, i.e. determiners, quantifiers and adjective modifiers.

Reference literature:

Alyoshkina 2000 = Алёшкина 2000: *Деепричастиясь*. In “*Эрзянь кель. Морфемика, валонь теевема ды морфология*”: Вузонь эрзянь ды финнэнь отделениянь тонавтницятнень туртов /Редколлегиясь: Саранск: Тип. «Крас. Окт.». 2000. – 280 с. – Мордов.-эрзя яз.

Abbreviations:

ADV = **ADVERB**, DET = **DETERMINATE**, GEN = **GENITIVE**, ELA = **ELATIVE**, N = **NOUN**, NOM = **NOMINATIVE**, PRED = **PREDICATE**, PRETĪ = **PRETERIT I**, SG = **SINGULAR**, V = **VERB**, V-INF-ELA = **ELATIVE GERUND**