

Inflected infinitives and subject clitics in Mari

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1 The paper focuses on infinitival clauses in Meadow Mari (Uralic; the Morkinsko-Sernur dialect) that allow apparent subject agreement (INFL). I show that (i) INFL depends on a predication relation, i.e., it is only allowed when the embedded FinP/TP is directly predicated of the DP that INFL matches, and (ii) its presence correlates with the information-structure properties of the sentence. I propose that INFL is not a manifestation of an obligatory agreement relation between the subject and the non-finite T head, but rather an instance of cliticization/clitic doubling that is linked to pro-drop (see [Bradley & Hirvonen 2022](#) on pro-drop in Mari).

The data were collected in elicitation sessions with two native speaker consultants in 2022-24.

2 The types of infinitival clauses available in Mari are presented in Table 1, with inflected infinitives exemplified in (1). In the table, “antecedent” is the matrix/embedded DP whose features may potentially be spelled out as an INFL on the infinitive. (For the sake of simplicity, I assume that Mari nominal phrases are DPs.)

<i>matrix predicate</i>	<i>antecedent</i>	<i>configuration</i>	<i>INFL</i>
‘decide’, phasal verbs	DP _{NOM}	predicative control	--
emotive verbs (‘love’, ‘hate’)	DP _{NOM}	predicative control	--
‘ask’, ‘beg’	DP _{ACC}	logophoric control	--
verbs of order	DP _{DAT}	logophoric control	--
Dependents of evaluative adjectives	DP _{DAT}	predication	✓
Dependents of deontic modals	DP _{DAT}	predication	✓
Rationale clauses (adjuncts)	DP _{DAT}	predication	✓

(1) a. (Təlat) kudəβečə-š pur-aš(-et) (manən), pečə-m sümər-enna.
 you.DAT yard-ILL go-INF-2SG COMP fence-ACC break-PST1PL
either *təlat* **or** INFL: ‘We broke the fence for you to get into the yard.’ (neutral)
 with **both** *təlat* and INFL: ‘We broke the fence FOR YOU^{EMPH} to get into the yard.’
 without *təlat* and INFL: ‘We broke the fence to get into the yard.’

b. (Məlanna) kudəβečə-š pur-aš(-na) (*manən) nele/ saj/ küleş.
 we.DAT yard-ILL go-INF-1PL COMP hard good necessary
either *məlanna* **or** INFL: ‘For us it is hard/good/necessary to get into the yard.’ (neutral)
 with **both** *məlanna* and INFL: ‘FOR US^{EMPH} it is hard/good/necessary to get into the yard.’
 without *məlanna* and INFL: ‘(In general) it is hard/good/necessary to get into the yard.’

3 The following pattern emerges from the data above. First, INFL appears only when there is either a dative matrix controller or a dative embedded subject; however, the presence of a DP_{DAT} does not automatically entail the presence of INFL (see the verbs of order below in (3)). Second, INFL is optional, and its presence correlates with information structure-related properties of the sentence. As shown in (1), when both INFL and the DP that it cross-references are present, the DP receives an emphatic/contrastive interpretation. Aside from this, sentences with and without INFL have the same structure, contra the analyses that assume that INFL is present in raising infinitives and that it is absent in controlled infinitives (e.g., [É. Kiss 2002](#), [Szécsényi 2017](#)).

4 The following generalization captures the availability of INFL in infinitival clauses:

(2) INFL may appear on the infinitive only when the latter is predicated of a non-NOM DP. First, INFL is allowed with a DP_{DAT}, but only in some contexts. As I will show, the presence of INFL correlates with the size of the non-finite clause and the availability of partial control. INFL is allowed in the dependents of evaluative adjectives and modals (1b): these are smaller than CPs (they cannot contain a complementizer) and involve an infinitive dependent being predicated of a DP_{DAT}. INFL is also allowed in rationale clauses, where the embedded TP is predicated of the

embedded dative subject. INFL is banned in the dependents of verbs of order (3): these are full CPs (with a complementizer) and allow partial control; the latter property implies a more complex structure where the infinitival clause is not predicated of the controller directly ([Landau 2015](#)).

(3) Nuno (məlanna) [üşkəž-əm šüşkəl-aš(-*na) manən] kalas-enət.
 they we.DAT bull-ACC slaughter-INF-1PL COMP say-PST3PL

‘They told us to slaughter a/the bull.’ (INFL is prohibited with or without *məlanna*)

Second, INFL is prohibited with a **DP_{ACC}** controller (4). In the direct object control contexts, the infinitival clause is a full CP; partial control is allowed. Hence, such sentences instantiate non-predicative control and match the generalization in (2).

(4) Məj rveze-βlak-əm [pečə-m pudərt-aš(-*əšt) manən] jod-ənam.
 I boy-PL-ACC fence-ACC break-INF-3PL COMP ask-PST1SG

‘I asked the boys to break the fence.’ (INFL is prohibited with or without *rvezeβlakəm*)

Finally, INFL is prohibited with a **DP_{NOM}** controller (5). However, in the subject control contexts the infinitival clause is smaller than a CP and no partial control is allowed. Hence, the “non-NOM” part of the generalization in (2), to be accounted for below.

(5) [Pečə-m pudərt-aš(-*na) (*manən)] (me) jörat-ena.
 fence-ACC break-INF-1PL COMP we love-NPST1PL

‘We love to break fences.’ (INFL is prohibited with or without *me*)

5 As we saw above, INFL has a restricted distribution that depends on a predication relation. At the same time, when INFL is possible it is always optional, and its presence correlates with pro-drop and emphasis. This suggests that INFL does not manifest a standard subject-agreement relation established between the non-finite T and the embedded subject, where T obligatorily probes a DP. (Contra analyses in terms of T-probing, e.g., [Tóth 2000](#); [Sheehan 2014](#), [2018](#).) Compare it to the subject agreement in finite clauses, which is obligatory regardless of the presence of an overt subject and the information structure; additionally, its paradigm differs from that of INFL ([Riese et al. 2022](#)). As an alternative, I propose that INFL is an instance of cliticization/clitic-doubling; cf. the well-known tendency of clitic-doubling to interact with the information structure. Descriptively, whenever a DP is dropped its ϕ -features must be spelled out on a related predicate, to facilitate the interpretation. In sentences with a matrix evaluative adjective or a modal and in rationale clauses it is the embedded FinP/TP that is directly predicated of the DP_{DAT}. The full version of the paper further discusses possible formal mechanisms of feature ‘transmission’ between the subject and the predicate and their suitability to capture the Mari data; I outline a possible agreement-based analysis building upon Kalin ([2018](#), [2019](#)). When the features of a DP are realized as a clitic on the infinitive (i.e., INFL), the DP itself is dropped (cf. the avoid pronoun principle). In the presence of INFL the DP itself is overt if that is independently motivated by the need to pronounce it with an emphasis (since the clitic cannot be stressed). This account explains the ungrammaticality of (4): the embedded CP is not predicated of the DP_{ACC}. It also explains the ungrammaticality of (5): the DP_{NOM} obligatorily establishes an agreement relation with the matrix predicate and its ϕ -features are always spelled out. Simplifying, the DP can always be dropped and an additional INFL on the embedded infinitive would be redundant. Under an assumption that clitic-doubling involves **some** feature-sharing/agreement, the DP_{NOM} ceases to be an active goal having been probed by the matrix T.

6 The paper aimed to draw attention to the previously understudied inflected infinitives in Meadow Mari. Treating INFL as a clitic whose presence is linked to pro-drop allows us to capture all the relevant data. The Mari data show that inflected infinitives cross-linguistically do not form a homogenous class (cf. the work on Hungarian and Portuguese referenced above) and emphasizes the importance of distinguishing between the run-of-the-mill TP-internal subject agreement and clitic-doubling.