

56th Annual Meeting of the Societas Linguistica Europaea  
Athens, 30 August 2023



# Modal particles in exclamatives: the case of Udmurt

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# Introduction

- Modal/discourse particles “establish a link between the proposition expressed by an utterance and the knowledge and belief systems of the discourse participants.” (Zimmermann 2011).
- Modal particles may show incompatibility or affinity to particular sentence types (Zimmermann 2011).
- Modal particles are speech act operators (Jakobs 1991, Waltereit 2001, Schneider 2022).

# Introduction

(1) *Udo hat ja Gerda geheiratet.*

‘Udo has PRT married Gerda.’

Jakobs 1991: modal particle modify the illocutionary type of the sentence.

‘j-assertion’

“<...> someone who performs a j-assertion thereby expresses his belief that the addressee <...> neither believes that this proposition is false nor considers the possibility of its being false in the given situation.

# Introduction

Waltereit 2001: Modal particles modify the preparatory conditions (Searle 1969) at minimal linguistic expense.

(2) *Dein Mantel ist ja ganz schmutzig!* (Konig, 1997: 70)

‘But your coat is all dirty!’

“<...> the speaker is committed to the belief that the addressee’s coat is dirty.”

the preparatory condition of assertion “it is not obvious to S <speaker> and H <hearer> that H knows p” is cancelled.

# Introduction

- Schneider (2022) analyzes the meaning of Ger. *ja*, *etwa*, *doch* within the dynamic model of discourse (Farkas&Bruce 2010).

(3) A: *My boyfriend broke up with me.*

B: *Das ist ja blöd.*

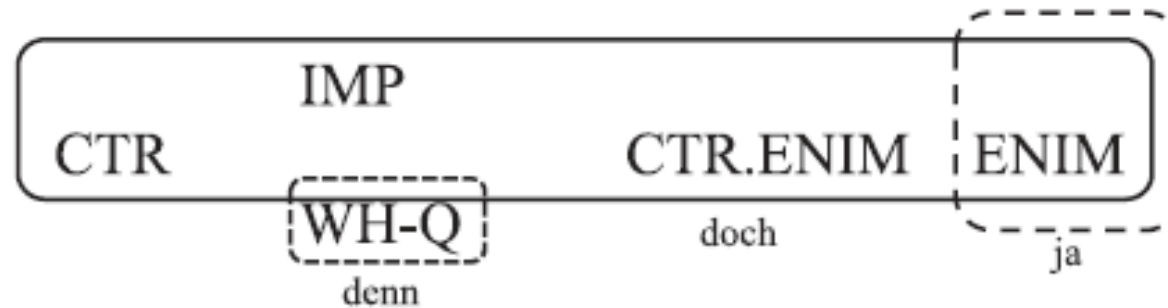
B: 'That's JA a bummer.'

- *ja* modifies a move by adding to its effect that it places the denotation into the CG <common ground> directly.

# Introduction

- Panov (2020) Typology of uncontroversial information markers (enimitives) based on their functions and sentence types they occur in.

German



# Introduction

- Batinić et al. 2015: Certain modal particles can be analyzed as intensifiers (degree modifiers) that change the sentence type from declarative to exclamatives.

(4) *Das Wasser ist **aber** warm!*

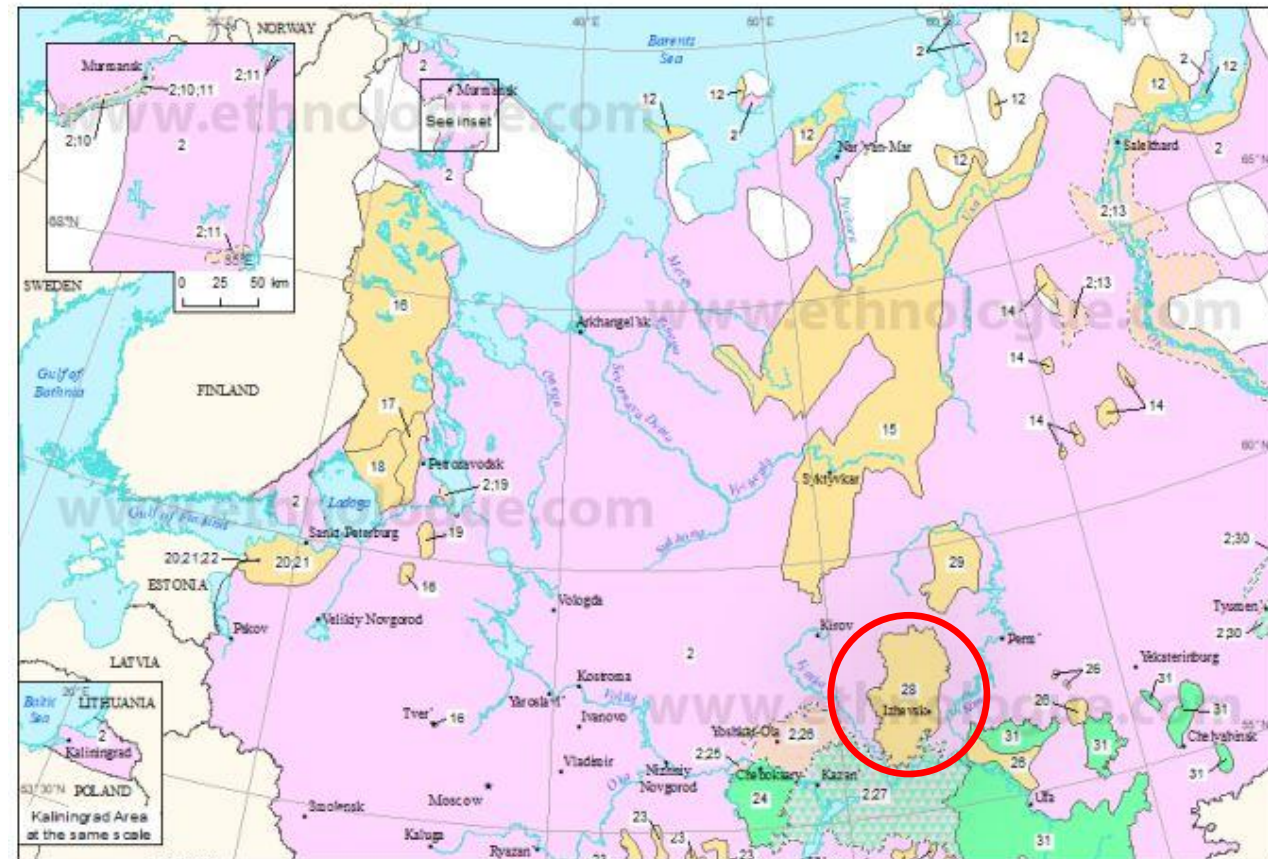
‘Oh, the water is really warm!’

# The Udmurt Language

- ✓ Permic < Uralic
- ✓ Spoken in the Udmurt Republic of the Russian Federation
- ✓ 324,338 native speakers
- ✓ Udmurt-Russian bilingualism
- ✓ SOV, shifting to SVO
- ✓ Modal particles are abundant in Udmurt (mostly enclitics; several sentence-initial particles)

## Western Russian Federation

See language listings for [Russian Federation](#)



[https://www.ethnologue.com/map/RU\\_w](https://www.ethnologue.com/map/RU_w)



# Udmurt particles =*uk* and =*dak*

*Uk* and *dak* in declarative sentences represent an argument for or against some other proposition.

(5) [ - Darling, if I fall into the river, what will you do? - asks a young girl her future husband.

- I will run to the next village to ask for help, - he answers.]

- *Dak* so kyd'okyn *uk*.

Ptcl 3sg far PTCL

'But it is far away.'

[- For you, I'm ready to go to the end of the Earth, - says the boy.]  
(serem.ru 2016)

# Udmurt particles =*uk* and =*dak*

## **uk**

- *uk* < neg.+Q (Arkhangelskiy 2023)
- enclitic; cannot occur sentence-initially
- typically follows the predicate.

## **Cooccurrence of *uk* and *dak*:**

- Dak P=*uk*.
- P \*=*dak=uk*/\*=*uk=dak*.

## ***Dak*=*dak***

- *dak* < rus (?dial.) *dak* (Leinonen 2002; Post 2006) < demonstrative adverb 'so';
- used sentence-initially and as an enclitic;
- in Standard Udmurt, it is marked as colloquial;
- not in use in southernmost Udmurt dialects.

# Udmurt particles =*uk* and =*dak*

(6a) *Kyče kyržan so kyržā-z \*uk/\*dak?*

what.kind song 3SG sing-PST.3SG PTCL/ PTCL

Intended meaning: ‘What song did s/he sing?’

(6b) *Kyče kyržan so kyržaz uk/dak!*

what.kind song 3SG sing-PST.3SG PTCL/ PTCL

‘What a song s/he sang!’

- English degree modifiers can be used in wh-exclamatives but not in information-seeking wh-questions:

(7a) *How incredibly large your garden is!*

(7b) \**How incredibly large is your garden?* (Rett 2011)

# Questions

1. What is the semantic contribution of the particles =*uk* and =*dak* in exclamatives?
2. Can the particles *uk* and *dak* change the sentence type from declarative to exclamative?

# Semantic-pragmatic properties of exclamatives

Exclamatives represent a separate sentence type (“minor”, as opposed to “major” ones – declarative, interrogative, and imperative sentences (König&Siemund 2007)). They may come in a variety of syntactic forms.

- Exclamatives convey the **surprised** stance of the speaker.
- The proposition in exclamatives is **presupposed**.
- The presupposed proposition involves a **scalar degree**.
- The degree itself is not presupposed.

(adapted from Michaelis 2001)

# Method: Acceptability judgments

Class of the intensified word/Type of construction	adverb	adjective	verb	noun
wh-exclamative				
demonstrative exclamative				
tautological construction 'A if A'				
Modal particle as a sole means of exclamation / particle exclamatives (Martens 2016)				

# Method: Acceptability judgments

Degree word: adverb

(8)(Oj,) *kyče/\*kyžy*      *ton*      *ćeber*      *ekt-iško-d*      *uk/dak!*  
INTJ what.kind/how      you      beautiful      dance-PRS-2SG PTCL

Intended meaning: 'How beautifully you dance!'

Degree word: adjective

(9)(Oj,) *kyče/\*mar*      *ćeber*      *kyržan*      *uk/dak!*  
INTJ what.kind/what beautiful      song      PTCL

Intended meaning: 'What a beautiful song!'



# Method: Acceptability judgments

Degree word: verb

(10) (Oj,) *kyče ton **ekt-iško-d** uk/dak!*

INTJ what.kind you dance-PRS-2SG PTCL

Intended meaning: '(Wow,) how you dance!'

Degree word: noun

(11) (Oj,) *kyče **kyržan** uk/dak!*

INTJ what.kind song PTCL

Intended meaning: '(Wow,) what a song!'

# Method: Acceptability judgments

(12) *Kyče/syče*                      *ćeber*                      *kyržan*                      ***uk/dak!***

what.kind/so                      beautiful                      song                      PTCL/PTCL

(13) *Ćeber*                      *ke*                      *ćeber*                      *kyržan*                      ***uk/dak!***

beautiful                      if                      beautiful                      song                      PTCL/PTCL

(14) *Ćeber*                      *kyržan*                      ***uk/dak!***

beautiful                      song                      PTCL/PTCL

Intended meaning: ‘What a beautiful song!’

# Results

Class of the intensified word/Type of construction	adverb	adjective	verb	noun
wh-exclamative	(uk/dak)	(uk/dak)	(uk/dak)	(uk/dak)
demonstrative exclamative	(uk/dak)	(uk/dak)	(uk/dak)	(uk/dak)
tautological construction 'A if A'	(uk/dak)	(uk/dak)	(uk/dak)	(uk/dak)
Modal particle as a sole means of exclamation / particle exclamatives (Martens 2016)	uk/dak	uk/dak	dak	dak

# Results

- If the degree word is not inherently scalar, the resulting interpretation of their cooccurrence with *uk* is that of surprise.
- In (x), the speaker is surprised by the fact that there is the Moon in the sky but not of the size or brightness of the Moon:

(15) (*Oj,*) *toleż uk!*  
INTJ moon PTCL  
'Oh, the Moon!'  
\*'Oh, what a Moon!'

(16) (*Oj,*) *toleż dak!*  
INTJ moon PTCL  
'Oh, what a Moon!'  
\*'Oh, the Moon!'

# Discussion

- Surprise
  - ~~Presupposed proposition~~
  - ~~Scalar degree~~
- 
- Uk cannot bring the degree component to a sentence.
  - The proposition is not presupposed in (15): ‘Oh, the Moon!’
  - Probably *uk* brings the surprise reading?  
(i.e. is it a mirative particle)?

# Discussion

- Badan&Cheng (2015) argue that the phrase of a guest to a host of the party “How delicious your dinner is!” is typically a compliment but not an expression of the speaker’s surprise (as if something less than delicious was expected).
- In Udmurt, the particle *uk* can be used in non-surprise utterances of this kind:

(17) (*Oj*,) *tuž* *českyt* *pęra-m-ed* *uk!*

INTJ very delicious cook-PST.EVID-2SG PTCL

‘Oh, you cooked very delicious (food)!’

# Discussion

- =*dak* is a proper degree modifier that can change a declarative sentence into an exclamative.
- =*uk* is a marker of **ego-evidentiality** and should be used together with other means of exclamation in order to form an exclamative.

Badan&Cheng (2015: 405): “exclamatives express the speaker's viewpoint (subjectivity) <...> in relation to a fact based on the **speaker's immediate and direct knowledge** (evidentiality). In other words, the fact expressed by the exclamative is always evident from the point of view of the speaker”.

- ego-evidentiality is also expressed through deictic elements in exclamatives.

# Discussion

Marandin (2008): ego-evidentiality is not compatible with perspective markers (either because of redundancy or the conflict in the marking of the source of evidence).

<i>(18) ?Mon</i>	<i>malpa-ško,</i>	<i>tuž</i>	<i>českyt</i>	<i>pęra-m-ed</i>	<i>uk!</i>
I	think-PRS.1SG	very	delicious	cook-PST.EVID-2SG	PTCL



# Discussion

- Ego-evidentiality is not restricted to exclamatives but may be manifested in other contexts, either being addressee-oriented or speaker-oriented:

The speaker suddenly remembers that their friend is coming soon (hence the speaker urgently has to prepare for the visit) and utters:

(19) *(Oj,) Anja tañi-tañi vu-o-z uk!*  
INTJ PN here-here come-FUT-3SG PTCL

‘Oh, Anja is coming soon!’

# Discussion

(20) Interviewer: ‘Although you are Tatar, you will probably understand the Udmurt folk worldview even better than Udmurts’.

Interviewee:

*Mon Udmurt šajer-yn ul-iško uk.*

I Udmurt republic-INE live-PRS.1SG PTCL

‘I live in the Udmurt Republic after all.’ (Udmurt duńńe)

# Discussion

- Udmurt has grammatical means of expressing evidentiality (Kubitsch 2021)

(21) (*Oj,*) *toleź uk/vylem!*  
INTJ moon PTCL/be:EVID  
'Oh, the Moon!'

Preferred in a 'mistaken believe' context:

(22) (*Oj,*) *Mark uk/vylem!*  
INTJ moon PTCL/ be:EVID  
'Oh, (it's) Mark!' ('I thought it was his twin brother').

# Discussion

In polar questions, *uk* represents a question strongly biased towards a positive answer. It reflects the previous stage of grammaticalization (as described in Arkhangelskiy 2023).

(23) *So*            *vu-o-z=\*a*            *uk?*

3SG      come-FUT-3SG=Q      PTCL

‘He will come, won’t he?’

# Conclusions

1. *Dak* and *=dak* have different functions.
2. *=dak* is used as a degree modifier in exclamatives.
3. *=uk* is a marker of **ego-evidentiality** (speaker's immediate knowledge).
4. The source of knowledge is not necessarily direct.
5. Ego-evidentiality can be manifested in declaratives and be speaker- or addressee-oriented.

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# Thank you!

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This research is done within the project “Grammar of discourse particles in Uralic languages” supported by the Estonian Research Council grant (PUT 1290).