

Well, why are they so many? – In search of explanations for the abundance of discourse particles in Yugan Khanty

Yugan Khanty (<Ob-Ugric<Finno-Ugric) has a wide range of particles (Csepregi 2017: 205--209), which at first glance easily can be seen as discourse particles (DiP; last word (1)).

(1) Schön 2017

<i>tʲət</i>	<i>mən-t-ən</i>	<i>qu.nt</i>	<i>mən-v</i>	<i>βəs</i>
so	go-PRS-2SG	if	go-IMP.2SG	PTCL
‘So if you have to go, well go!’				

However, apart from modal particles, the literature seems to avoid the description of DiPs in Khanty (Csepregi 2017, Gugán–Schön 2022, Honti 1984).

This corpus-based study aims to identify and describe DiPs in modern Yugan Khanty according to Fischer’s (2006) theory along with their functions. Among the possible DiPs, one commonality peaks out: The function ‘well’. This is used as a first anchor point since there are at least 14 particles which appear in narratives and dialogues with this same discursive function, namely: *v:*, *jv:*, *kutʃ*, *qatʲv*, *no*, *no:*, *nu*, *o:s*, *tʲaqv*, *tʲe*, *tʲet*, *tʲi*, *tʲu:*, *βəs*. They can be told apart by origin: One dates back to Proto-Ob-Ugric (*o:s*), some are grammaticalized from pronouns (*tʲe*, *tʲet*, *tʲi*, *tʲu:*), borrowed from Russian (*v:*, *kutʃ*, *no*, *no:*, *nu*) or Tatar (*jv:*), while some have unclear etymology (*qatʲv*, *tʲaqv*, *βəs*; cf. DWS 1, 189, 307, 570, 588, 979, 1489, 1491, 1492, 1634). They also can be systematized by the fact that while some of them are monosemantic (*v:* ‘well’, *jv:* ‘well’), others are highly polyfunctional, like ex. *βəs* being a) a coordinating conjunction, b) an interrogative particle as well as c) a DiP (1); or *o:s* with around seven functions: ‘and’, ‘or’, ‘again’, ‘suddenly’ ‘more’, ‘lo and behold’ (2), ‘well’.

(2) Schön 2019

<i>sv:r</i>	<i>o:syə</i>	<i>rv:s-ən</i>	<i>mɐ:</i>	<i>tuβet</i>	<i>o:s</i>	<i>βv:γ-t-əm</i>
now_then	next	time-LOC	1SG	3SG.ACC	PTCL	ask_for-PRS-1SG
‘Now then, lo I will ask for him next time.’						

A previous study on the demonstrative pronoun *tʲi* shows its grammaticalization pattern from demonstrative determiner to manner demonstrative to discourse particles with several functions like for example deictic presentative (3), modal particle, summarizing particle (Schön 2024).

(3) Gugán–Schön 2022: 633

‘[The wife] picked up her husband’s eyes [=glasses] and took them home. She brought them home and put them in her sewing box. The husband rode downhill, he rode the sledge.’

i:ttən-yə jiy-m-e ʈi:
night-TRNS become-PTCP.PST-LAT **PTCL**

‘After night broke on, **here it was!**’

But the different origins and the possible polyfunctionality still does not explain the fact that all above mentioned particles with similar functions like ‘well’ are present synchronically in Yugan Khanty – as proves the balanced corpus of 59.000 tokens (39.000 structured narratives, 20.000 free dialogues, 23 native speakers, collected between 2010–2016 in Siberia) used in this study.

This research is in search of explanations for this abundance of discourse particles in Yugan Khanty looking at both language external (speaker background) and internal (function, syntax) factors. The mono- or bilingualism of the speakers will be taken into account, as well as the text genre (tales, legends, personal accounts, unstructured interviews) or form of the data (dialog, narrative – direct or indirect speech). Next to the sentence types (declarative, interrogative, imperative, exclamative), the syntactic position (sentence initial, internal, final, stand alone) will be analysed in order to establish possible patterns for the DiPs.

Each and every above mentioned DiP will be examined for their different functions to identify a distribution between them.

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