

Focus positions and the distribution of interrogative phrases in Udmurt

The aim of my talk is to explore the relationship between focus placement and the distribution of interrogative phrases in Udmurt in the light of the ongoing (S)OV > (S)VO change (cf. Asztalos 2018) of Udmurt.

In old Udmurt texts, interrogative words typically immediately preceded the verb (1) (Shutov 1999), which suggests that they occurred in the same position where focussed items are canonically located (cf. Tánčzos 2010).

In contemporary Udmurt, however, the relation between the position of interrogative phrases and foci seems to be more complex.

Foci in contemporary Udmurt can also be located in positions other than the immediately preverbal one. A sentence-final position, presumably under Russian influence, has become available for a considerable part of the speakers (Tánčzos 2010, Asztalos & É. Kiss 2016), and sentence-initial focus placement is also accepted by a smaller part of the speakers (Asztalos & É. Kiss 2016).

As for interrogative phrases in contemporary Udmurt, Asztalos (2018)'s investigations indicate that they are most frequently located sentence-initially and are often (2) (but not necessarily (3)) immediately followed by the verb, giving often rise to non-verb-final sentences. Sentence-final placement of interrogative phrases, unlike of foci, is rare (4). Finally, interrogative phrases can sporadically be placed in the middle of the sentence (presumably after a topical constituent), in a position not immediately preceding the verb (5). In my talk, I examine whether speakers' preference for any of the above focus positions correlates with their preference for interrogative phrase placement. In a wider perspective, I intend to investigate to what extent the placement of interrogative phrases is subject to Russian influence. Further questions to be studied include the possible correlation between the syntactic function of interrogative phrases and their position, and whether interrogative phrases' placement is related to any difference in the semantic interpretation of the sentence.

- (1) *Ad'ami köña syle?*
person how_much costs
'How much does a person cost?' (Shutov 1999)
- (2) *Köña arjos myno iñi so praviloos lašaň veraškonjos -
how_many years go already that rules about conversations
čengešonjos?
disputes*
'For how many years have there been going conversations and disputes about those rules?' (Asztalos 2018)
- (3) *Maly ton soosty merttiškod?*
why you them plant
'Why are you planting them?' (ibid.)
- (4) *Školajazy mil'emyz intyjazy kytčy?*
in_their_school us accommodated where
'So where did they accommodate us in their school?' (ibid.)
- (5) *Ton mar tatyn kariškod (...)?*
you what here do
'What are you doing here (...)?' (ibid.)