

The indirect evidential marker in questions in Udmurt¹

The presentation discusses the indirect evidential marker in questions in Udmurt from a typological point of view.

Udmurt is a Uralic language, part of the Permic subgroup, spoken in the Vyatka-Kama region in the Russian Federation. The language has approximately 330 000 speakers, who are Udmurt-Russian bilinguals. The use of Russian is dominant in the cities and in public administration, while Udmurt is mainly the language of home and rural areas (Salánki – Kondratieva 2018: 166–167).

Evidentiality is the linguistic marking of information source and type (Aikhenvald 2004). The category of evidentiality is in interaction with other categories related to knowledge, such as epistemic modality and mirativity (Aikhenvald 2021). Naturally, languages differ in the complexity of their evidential systems from a quantitative (number of markers) and a qualitative (semantic and functional complexity of markers) point of view.

In Udmurt, evidentiality is morphologically encoded. It has a small evidential system distinguished only in the past tenses. The marker of indirect evidentiality is fused with the marking of the past tense and it is primarily used to express that the speaker has no direct experience about the events in question (Leinonen & Vilkuna 2000, Skribnik & Kehayov 2018). The marker does not differentiate between evidence types but reflects on hearsay or inferential evidence contextually. The marker also can indicate mirativity, lack of control in first person context and implicitly lower degree of certainty (Siegl 2004, Kubitsch 2018). The interpretation of the evidential marker is usually context-bound.

The typological analysis of evidential markers in questions has been addressed by many scholars (Aikhenvald 2004, 2015; San Roque et al. 2017, Forker 2018). The evidential system can be reduced in questions, there can be a change of perspective (also known as interrogative flip), and the interpretation of evidentials in questions can differ from their declarative counterparts. Skribnik & Kehayov (2018: 542) briefly notes some properties of evidentials in questions in relation to the Permic languages (Komi-Zyrian, Komi-Permyak and Udmurt). These will also be critically discussed in the presentation. However, a more elaborated analysis focusing explicitly on Udmurt has not yet been carried out.

The research material consists of corpus data from the main corpus and social media subcorpus of the Udmurt corpora.² Furthermore, observations drawn from interviews conducted with native speakers are also included.³ The presentation focuses on root questions and the main objectives are the following: Does the indirect evidential occur in information-seeking questions? Does the evidential marker occur both in polar and constituent questions? Is there an interrogative flip, i.e. whose perspective is represented in questions with the indirect evidential? How is the interpretation of questions with evidentials different from their declarative counterparts?

Based on the research material it can be concluded that in Udmurt it is possible to use the indirect evidential marker in proper information seeking questions, as well as in polar and constituent questions. There is no interrogative flip, therefore the indirect evidential marker in

¹ The research is part of the project named *Evidencialitás az uráli nyelvekben* (Evidentiality in the Uralic languages) (NKFIH, K139298, 2021–2024).

² http://udmurt.web-corpora.net/index_en.html (last visited: 10/07/2021)

³ The interviews were conducted by the author regarding evidentiality in Udmurt.

(1) Context: The speaker is speaking on the phone with their mother. The mother suddenly hangs up and calls again half hour later.

- *Papa-jed kuno pyr-t-i-z, so-in kušt-i trubka-me.*
 father-POSS.2SG guest enter-CAUS-PST-3SG that-INST hang.up-PST[1SG] tube-ACC.POSS.1SG

- *Valamon. Kin-jos-yz so pyr-t-em?*
 clear who-PL-ACC he enter-CAUS-EV[3SG]

- *Kitajec-jos-yz.*
 Chinese-PL-ACC

'-Your father welcomed guests, so I hung up.

- I see. Who did he welcome?

- Chinese.

questions reflect on the speaker's information source and not on the addressee's. Therefore, there is no answer parallelism either (cf. Bhadra 2020). In example (1) the speaker does not have direct evidence, therefore the evidential form is used in the constituent question.

Example (2) is from a question-answer section from an Udmurt newspaper. The polar question is in the evidential past because the questioner cannot have direct experience about the personality of the addressee as a child.

(2) Context: The questioner wants to know how this media personality can be still playful as an adult. Then they ask whether she was mischievous as a child.

- *Šajan vyl-em=a so piči dyr-ja-z?*
 mischievous be-EV[3SG]=Q s/he small time-INE-POSS.3SG

- *Köškemyt šajan.*
 dreadfully mischievous

'-Was she mischievous when she was small?

- Dreadfully mischievous.'

Regarding interpretation, the indirect evidential marker in questions shows the same patterns of interpretations as in its declarative counterparts. According to some consultants, a question formed with the indirect evidential is a special question (rhetorical or reflective) which expresses the surprise of the speaker, while the counterpart formed with the non-evidential form can be interpreted as an information seeking question. Embedded questions are not in the focus of the current presentation, but it has to be mentioned that it is possible to use indirect evidential forms in such constructions as well.

The results show that it is possible to use the evidential past in information seeking questions, in polar and constituent ones as well. Regarding the question of perspective change, the evidential marker signals on the speaker's source of information, thus there is no interrogative flip. The meaning of the indirect evidential in questions correlates with its meaning in declarative sentences, however, mirativity frequently appears in the interpretation of such questions.

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