

Uralic studies, languages, and researchers

Edited by Sándor Szeverényi

Studia uralo-altaica 54

Redigunt:

Katalin Sipőcz

András Róna-Tas

István Zimonyi

Uralic studies, languages, and researchers

Proceedings of the 5th Mikola Conference
19–20, September 2019

Edited by Sándor Szeverényi

Szeged, 2021

© University of Szeged,
Department of Altaic Studies,
Department of Finno-Ugrian Philology

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by other means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission in writing of the author or the publisher.

Printed in 2021.

Printed by: Innovariant Ltd., H-6750 Algyő, Ipartelep 4.

ISBN 978-963-306-803-8 (printed)

ISBN 978-963-306-804-5 (pdf)

ISSN 0133-4239 (Print)

ISSN 2677-1268 (Online)

Table of contents

Foreword.....	9
<i>Sándor Szeverényi</i>	
Notes on Nicolaes Witsen and his Noord en Oost Tartarye.....	11
<i>Rogier Blokland</i>	
Undiscovered treasures: From the field research archive to the digital database.....	27
<i>Beáta Wagner-Nagy, Chris Lasse Däbritz, and Timm Lehmborg</i>	
On the language use of the first Finnish medical text	45
<i>Meri Juhos</i>	
Sajnovics, the responsible fieldworker	55
<i>Sándor Szeverényi</i>	
The life and work of the Saami theologian and linguist: Anders Porsanger	71
<i>Ivett Kelemen</i>	
The use and semantics of the Northern Mansi diminutive <i>-riś~rəś</i>	81
<i>Bernadett Bíró</i>	
The event of “giving” and “getting” in Siberian Uralic languages	99
<i>Katalin Sipőcz</i>	
A word-formational approach to neologisms in modern Northern Mansi	119
<i>Susanna Virtanen</i>	
Word and stem repetitions in the heroic epic songs collected by Antal Reguly	131
<i>Mária Sipos</i>	
The use of body part terms in expressing emotions in Udmurt	149
<i>Rebeka Kubitsch</i>	
The characteristics of responses given to compliments in Udmurt.....	173
<i>Zoltán Németh</i>	
On some Chuvash–Mari shared lexemes and Agyagási’s “Late Gorodets” hypothesis ..	185
<i>Christopher Culver</i>	

“Сувениры Севера” Minority identity and discourse. Representation of indigenous minorities of Northern Russia in the digital media. The case of Dudinka	201
<i>Zsuzsa Várnai and Ágnes Hámori</i>	
Reconsidering the Nganasan vowel system	229
<i>László Fejes</i>	
New aspects in the study of Mari, Udmurt, and Komi-Permyak: The <i>Typological Database of the Volga Area Finno-Ugric Languages</i>	255
<i>Erika Asztalos, Nikolett F. Gulyás, Laura Horváth, and Bogáta Timár</i>	
Ethnosyntax in Siberian Uralic Languages (a project report)	275
<i>Bernadett Bíró, Katalin Sipőcz, and Sándor Szeverényi</i>	

The characteristics of responses given to compliments in Udmurt

Zoltán Németh

University of Szeged

1. Introduction

I am dedicating my study to the topic of linguistic politeness in connection with Udmurt, because, as was reported by Shirobokova (2011: 31–38), in case of the smaller Finno-Ugric languages the number of sociolinguistic studies is really low. This is true not only of sociolinguistics, but also of sociopragmatics, where politeness research also belongs. Before I started to do my research on this topic, basically there were no studies carried out on politeness in connection with the smaller Finno-Ugric languages spoken in the territory of the Russian Federation.

The question arises: is it necessary at all to do this kind of research on these languages? And the answer is yes, especially in the case of Udmurt, because as we can find it out from Pischlöger (2016), the Udmurt language is the most visible minority language on the social network sites among the minority languages spoken in Russia. It is important to highlight that this is not only true of the Finno-Ugric languages spoken there, but of every minority language spoken in Russia, outstripping languages like Tatar, which is the most widely spoken minority language in Russia. Because of this high visibility the speakers of this language have an higher level of probability of being exposed to intercultural communication, which is considered to be quite a common phenomenon in the western part of Europe, but a new challenge for the Udmurts. In the case of intercultural communication knowing the accepted norms of the other group is inevitable to being successful.

In this study I present my results regarding the use of Udmurt language, structuring it in the following way. After the introduction I briefly discuss the present-day situation of the Udmurt language, which is followed by the discussion of the data collection and my informants. After these the next step the theoretical background of the research, the analysis of the data, and finally the results.

2. The current status of the Udmurt language

The Udmurt language belongs to the Uralic language family and within that to the Finno-Ugric languages, more specifically to the Permic sub-branch. The closest affiliated language to Udmurt is Komi. As Pischlöger (2016: 109-110) also discusses, Udmurt is mainly spoken in the territory named after them, Udmurtia, which is one of the republics of the Russian Federation. But the language is not spoken exclusively there, but also in the neighboring republics of Tatarstan and Bashkiria, the Kirov and Perm territories, and there are also speakers living abroad, e.g. in Estonia.

Unfortunately, like in the case of most Finno-Ugric minorities of Russia, the number of the people considering themselves Udmurt shows a declining tendency. In the results of the 2002 census their number was around 640,000, but in eight years it dropped to 550,000. And this is only the number of ethnic Udmurts, which does not equal the speakers of the language. That number is around 325,000 (Pischlöger 2006:110), which is about the 60% of all ethnic Udmurts. It also does not help the situation of the language that they form a minority even in their own republic. The Udmurt Republic is inhabited by approximately 1.5 million people. The largest ethnic group is the Russian, with about 912,000 people, or about 61% of the population. The second largest group is people who consider themselves Udmurt, totaling 410,000 people (27%), and the third largest is the Tatars, who number slightly less than 100,000 people (7%). The remaining 5% of people living within the borders of Udmurtia is made up by various smaller ethnic groups. One more detail about them that should definitely be mentioned is that the dominance of the Russian language is not only present at the level of the republic but also in the cities (Winkler 2001: 5).

As a result of all this, basically all Udmurts who speak the language are Udmurt–Russian bilinguals, because they have no chance to avoid the use of Russian language in their lives. There is speculation that in the oldest generation it could be possible to find Udmurt monolingual speakers, but even if this is true, their number would be so small that it is safe to say that it is negligible. But at the same time, mainly around the southern border of Udmurtia there are Udmurt–Russian–Tatar multilingual speakers as well. Because of this southern effect of the Tatar language it is also noticeable among the Udmurt speakers that the language use of the Northern Udmurts is mainly influenced by the Russian language, but that of the Southern Udmurts is heavily affected by the Tatar language (Edygarova 2014: 378).

3. Data collection and informants

For data collection I used the CCSARP (Cross-Cultural Study of Speech Act Realization Patterns) discourse completion tests (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984), for four politeness situations, but in this study, I only discuss the results of the answers to

questions requiring compliment responses. I have chosen the CCSARP discourse completion test because it can be used cross-culturally (as the name suggests), so later my results can be compared to similar results in other languages. The exact questionnaire that mine is based on is the one used by Szili (2013) for her own research on the Hungarian language, with some modifications. First of all, it was translated into Udmurt and into Russian by myself, and the translations were checked by Udmurt lecturer Ekaterina Suncova of the Department of Finno-Ugric Studies, University of Szeged, Hungary, a native Udmurt speaker (who speaks both Udmurt and Russian), and who has a very high proficiency of Hungarian as well and is, therefore, able to compare the translations with the original texts. But the translation was not the only change to be made, there were other bigger or smaller modification to be done. By smaller changes, I mean localization: there were situations that would not have been familiar to the speakers, which had to be changed to something that is thematically the same but more realistic for the informants. I consider these smaller changes, because it is just the redressing of the same situation with no effect on the results. Bigger changes mainly affected situations where the speakers had to give negative answers. In these situations it was often explicitly in the description of the situation that it required a negative answer, but by stating this explicitly there was a fair chance of these being leading and hypothetical questions, and so the results would be unreliable.

In the part of the questionnaire referring to the speakers themselves, I asked them about their mother tongue(s), place of origin, age, and in what program they were studying at the moment of the completion of the task. I did not ask them about their gender specifically, because the questionnaire was structured in such a way that this information was acquired anyway (in the case of responses to compliments there was a separate set of situations for men vs. women).

I used my questionnaire to collect data from Udmurt speakers enabled by the short-term scholarship of the organization Campus Mundi which made it possible for me to carry out fieldwork at Udmurt State University in October, 2017. During the data collection I received a lot of help from the co-workers of the Institute of Udmurt Philology, Finno-Ugric Studies and Journalism, where I carried out my research. My target group was the Udmurt speaking students of the BA program of the University. I chose informants of university student age for multiple reasons. First, sociopragmatic studies are usually carried out with the participation of this age group, so this way my results on Udmurt could be compared later with results of studies on other languages. Second, if I had not been able to travel to Udmurtia to carry out my research, I still could have collected data from my subjects because this is the age group whose answers are the least affected by side effects of an online completion of the questionnaire. And the third reason is that, in my opinion, speakers of this age

group are the most endangered by language shift, because they usually come from villages which are usually Udmurt dominant, to the capital city which is heavily Russian dominant. So, it is important to do research on their language use because the more we know about it, the better strategies can be made to prevent them from shifting from their native language to Russian, and if we can reach that, there is a greater chance to stop the declining numbers or even turn them around.

The university students I asked were studying in the Udmurt language program of the Udmurt State University. There were 149 students enrolled in the Udmurt language program, of whom 94 were majored in Udmurt linguistics (28 first-year, 24 second-year, 22 third-year, and 20 fourth-year students) and 55 were teacher trainees in the Udmurt language (14 first-year, 11 second-year, 14 third-year, and 16 second-year students). I chose them because the language of instruction in their classes was mainly Udmurt, so to be able to complete their studies, they had to have a high enough proficiency in the language. Moreover, they used the Udmurt language on an everyday basis, which is not always true in the case of those students who may be proficient speakers of the language but less exposed to it, which can impact on their language use.

Although first I planned to analyze the answers of subjects of both genders, but in the end only the women's answers were taken into consideration. The reason is that among the students majoring in Udmurt at the Institute of Udmurt Philology, Finno-Ugric Studies and Journalism, the number of male students is very low. Of the 149 enrolled students only 10 were male, 3 of them in the first year, 2 of them in the second, 1 of them in the third, and four of them in the fourth. These were the numbers for potential male informants, which clearly shows the female dominancy in the numbers. The proportions were even more skewed when I was there doing fieldwork, because two of the ten potential male? informants were abroad in an exchange program. Because of these small numbers I decided to examine the language use of the female? speakers, because their number is high enough to get relevant answers, but the number of answers by the males would be too small for generalizations. In total I received 120 filled out questionnaires, which is about the 81% of the students enrolled, and after removing the answers of the males, I was still left with responses of 80% of all the students.

There was a problem that I encountered during the preparation of the study. As I mentioned above, those Udmurts who speak Udmurt also speak Russian. And not only do they speak both, but they often use mixed language (Pischlöger 2016:111). Because of this I had to find a way to get answers in Udmurt which would reflect the everyday use of the language, with Russian words mixed in, rather than purist and artificial answers. I decided to solve this problem by telling the subjects in the instructions that in the questionnaire all interlocutors are all assumed to speak Udmurt, even if they are

a person unknown to the subject, because in those cases they heard the other person speak on their phones in Udmurt. This implied to the subjects that Udmurt is the language expected for the answer but did not rule out the use of Russian language elements. This method was successful both during the pilot tests and in the main study as well.

4. The theoretical background of the study

Before starting the discussion of the research made by me, and analyzing the results, I need to define what is meant by politeness and by response to compliments.

There are two well-known theories that laid down the basics of politeness research: the first one is Leech's theory (1983), which is based on Grice's maxims (1975), and the other one is Brown and Levinson's (1987), based on Goffman's (1967) face theory. According to the former, we talk about politeness in those cases when the speaker violates one of the four maxims (of quantity, quality, mood, or manner) to avoid doing harm to the other person, e.g. the speaker provides less information than is needed, or composes their speech that way that the meaning is opaque.

The starting point for the latter theory is the two faces of people, discussed as positive and negative face. Positive face represents the speaker's desire to have their actions valued in a positive way. On the other hand, negative face expresses the desire of the speaker to not to be held back from carrying out their actions, and also their desire to carry out their actions autonomously. In those cases when someone is polite, they try to defend the other person's face from threatening even by doing damage to their own. This latter theory was later expanded by Foley (1997), who said that both participants of the communication should feel appreciated. This remark has an important role, for example, in the case of asking for forgiveness.

Searle (1975: 357) discusses response to politeness as a member of the group of expressives among speech acts, which expresses the attitude of the participant towards the current situation. Szili (2013: 156) claims that one of the most important characteristics of this speech act is that the compliment and the response to it cannot be separated from each other. The reason behind this is that in many cases in case of seeing the answer only we cannot reconstruct what the compliment could have been, e.g. in case of answers like *thanks, thanks, yours too or thank you, but you are exaggerating* we do not have any clue about what the compliment was. And according to Schlegoff and Sacks (1973: 296), the compliment and the response to it form an adjacency pair, because they are not only connected to each other functionally but temporally as well.

5. The analysis of the data

In my analysis of the responses to the compliments I assigned them to 3 main categories: (A) the speaker agrees with the compliment, e.g. in (1); (B) when the speaker disagrees with the compliment, as in (2); and (C) when the speaker tries to avoid self-praise, as in (3).

(1)	<i>Мон</i>	<i>тууж</i>	<i>шумнот-үүсько-Ө</i>	<i>тыныд</i>	<i>кельш-е</i>	<i>шуыса.</i>
	I	very	be.happy-PRES-1SG	you.DAT	appeal-PRES.3SG	that.
	‘I’m very happy that you like it.’					

(AAN11012124)

(2)	<i>Ой,</i>	<i>чик</i>	<i>озьы</i>	<i>өвөл</i>	<i>со.</i>
	Oh,	totally	that.way	to.be.NEG.PRES	that.
	‘Oh, that is not true at all.’				

(JD11012124)

(3)	<i>Асътэ-лы</i>	<i>тау</i>	<i>лыктам-ды</i>	<i>понна.</i>	
	yourselves-DAT.	thanks	arrival-PX.2PL	because.of	
	‘Thank you to you for coming.’				

(AAN11012124)

Of course, these categories have many sub-strategies, because there are various ways to express agreement or disagreement with a compliment, and there are various strategies in which one can avoid self-praising. Here is the complete list of all the strategies (based on Szili 2013: 159–162):

- (A) Expressing agreement with the compliment
 - (A1) Expressing acceptance
 - (A2) Thanking
 - (A3) Expressing appeal
 - (A4) Counter-compliment/offering the target of the compliment for the other person
 - (A5) Joking about the compliment
- (B) Expressing disagreement with the compliment
 - (B1) Devaluating the target of the compliment
 - (B2) Expressing uneasiness/discomfort about the compliment

- (B3) Devaluating the compliment itself
- (B4) Describing the basis of the disagreement with the compliment

(C) Avoiding self-praise

- (C1) Name another person who should be complimented
- (C2) changing topics
- (C3) expressing how much effort was needed to achieve the result
- (C4) not taking the compliment into consideration
- (C5) skepticism, seeking for certainty

These strategies can be used on their own (4) or be combined with each other (5) as well.

- (4) *Бен, мыным но яра*
 yes I.DAT also like
 ‘Yeah, I also like it.’

(AP21003115)

- (5) *Тая бадзым, ачид но туж чебер*
 thanks big, yourself also very nice
 ‘Thank you very much, you are pretty as well.’

(AGV21003115)

In this study I am looking for answers to the following questions:

- What are the most commonly used strategies and strategy combinations?
- Are there politeness related expressions borrowed from Russian despite of having equivalents in Udmurt?

My expectations based on my previous knowledge of spoken Udmurt are the following: in the case of the first question I expect them to use mainly short answers using only one strategy on its own, or combinations of two strategies. In my opinion the most common choice is the option to just say *thank you* without any other strategies. But it is not likely to be the most commonly used strategy because of the pressure of society to always give a positive answer, like in the case of some languages like English, because, like in the case of Hungarian, the speaker has the possibility to give negative answers to the questions. This is much more connected to the fact that one of the most well-known stereotypes that happens to be one of the most important values among the Udmurts is modesty. So, in their case the reason behind saying only *thank you* is much more connected to how this way they give a polite answer, and at the same time, they close the given situation (as they do not say anything that could

make the conversation go on, so there is a greater chance that the other person changes the topic).

In connection with the second question, my expectation is that Udmurt speakers do not use any politeness related expression that is borrowed from Russian. This expectation is also based on my personal experiences. There are many politeness related expressions in other situations that are borrowed from Russian, like *пожалуйста*, *извини(те)*, *прости(те)* etc. but they are not expected in responses to compliments. Also, as I mentioned above, I expect speakers to use mainly thanking, and it hardly occurs that they would use the Russian *спасибо* ‘thank you’ or *спасибо большое* ‘thank you very much’ instead of the Udmurt equivalents *may* and *may бадзым*, respectively. So, although I expect that speakers would use Russian words or expressions, in my opinion, they use only neutral expressions in connection with politeness.

6. Results

In the evaluation of my results first I discuss them as a whole, considering all the strategies and strategy combinations that were used by my informants, and then I focus on the most used ones. I categorized strategies and strategy combinations in the group of ‘most used ones’ that appeared at least five times. I chose five as the cutoff mark because if it was used five times, it means that, statistically, it was used by at least one student from each year plus once more.

When we take all the answers into consideration we find 98 different strategies and strategy combinations that were used by these students. Of all the answers, 658 included thanking, at least in some kind of combination. This means that it was used in 75% of the cases. If these cases are narrowed down to those where it was used as the one and only strategy, the result is 193, which is 22% of the cases, so almost in one quarter of the answers students only thanked their interlocutor for the compliment, which made it the leading answer, as was expected. If we analyze responses from the point of view of how many strategies were combined in the answers, we can see that there were 17 variants in which only one strategy was used (17% of the cases), there were 35 variants in which two strategies were combined (36% of the cases), and 46 variants where three or more strategies were combined (47% of the cases). According to these numbers, although the number of combinations including only one or two strategies is greater than the ones combining 3 or more, but there is only a slight difference (53% vs. 47%).



Figure 1. Number of strategies combined

But we should take it into consideration that in the first group there is a strategy that was used almost 200 times, while in the second group, the most used combination was used only six times, there were only three that were used five times, and all the others were used less than five times each. So although the number of combinations is almost as big as the ones with two or less combinations, but the 3+ combinations category was much more rarely used. So soon, when the results are narrowed down to the most used combinations only, their slice in the pie-chart will be much smaller.

The total number of strategies and combinations that belong to the most used ones is 31. This is a bit shy of 32% of all the cases, but actually they were in use in 87% of the cases. So, as mentioned above, of the 46 combinations containing 3+ elements only 4 remained. So although the number of variants was quite high, they were rarely used. Among these narrowed down variants, there were 583 answers that included thanking (89% of the answers) and 193 of them included thanking only (which is 25% of the answers). If we look at the answers from the point of view of strategies combined, we see that there were 12 variants where only one strategy was used (39% of the combinations), 15 variants where 2 strategies were combined (48% of the combinations), and only 4 where more than two strategies were combined (13% of the combinations). Another point that shows the dominance of short answers is that even the first combination that includes 3 strategies appears quite far down the list, it is in the 25th position, and was only used 6 times.



Figure 2. Number of strategies combined in the Top31

The use of the strategy of thanking was so dominant that it was not only the most frequently applied strategy with 193 occurrences, but it is followed by 5 combinations, all including it, and all of them were used more than 40 times each (A2C3: 67, A2A3: 54, A2C2: 51, A2A4: 45, A2A1: 44, A2B1: 40). Also, in the top 31, twelve of the most used strategies and combinations were strategies on their own, so almost all the strategies appeared without being combined with another.

7. Conclusion

As is visible from the results, my expectations have been met by the answers. Thanking was commonly used by the speakers. When we take the combinations and this strategy used alone together, they make up 74% of the cases, which increases to 89% when we narrow it down to the most used combinations. The use of thanking alone appeared in 22% of all the cases and in the case of the most used strategies it appeared in one-quarter of the cases. According to these numbers it is safe to state that although thanking is not an obligatory element of a response to a compliment, it is heavily expected. According to the numbers, it was also true that Udmurt students use mainly one or two strategies, because only 4 combinations (although these make up almost half of the combination variants used by the informants) consisted of 3 strategies, and almost all the strategies appeared on their own.

Getting further from the actual results and looking at them as a whole, it seems that, in the case of the responses to the compliments, the choice of the strategy is much more important than the length of the actual response itself. On the one hand, this is supported by the fact that the responses usually were quite short, and, on the other

hand, by the fact that even if speakers combined different strategies, it was mainly a combination of two. The reason behind this could be either because modesty is a highly appreciated trait among the Udmurts, or it is also plausible that the most frequently used strategies and strategy combinations are so powerful that the speakers do not feel the urge to further support their response, or by the nature of the situation itself, as in these situations the speakers' task is to avoid a possible threat of the face, in contrast with the apologies, where the threat is already present. The latest one is also supported by the fact that, in the case of apologies, the speakers often gave long answers in which they tried to explain the situation, often providing multiple explanations. Of course, these three possibilities can overlap each other as well, and the short answers are the result of combining them.

My expectations in connection with the use of Russian expressions were also met. I have not come across any answer that would have included *спасибо, спасибо большое* or any other politeness related words or expressions. Of course, there were other Russian words that were used by the speakers as a result of borrowing or code-switching, but all of them were neutral from the point of view of politeness.

Abbreviations

1	first person
3	third person
DAT	dative case
NEG	negation
PL	plural
PRES	present tense
PX	possessive suffix
SG	singular

References

- Blum-Kulka, Shoshana and Elite Olshtain 1984. Requests and apologies: Cross-Cultural Study of Speech Act Realization patterns. *Applied Linguistics*, 5(3): 196–213.
- Brown, Penelope, and Stephen C. Levinson 1987. *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Edygarova, Svetlana 2014. The varieties of the modern Udmurt Language. *Finnisch-Ugrische Forschungen* 62. 376–398.
- Foley, William 1997. *Anthropological linguistics: An introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell.

- Goffman, Erving 1967. *Interaction ritual: Essays on face-to-face behavior*. New York: Doubleday.
- Grice, Paul 1975. Logic and conversation. In: Cole, Peter and Morgan, Jerry L. (eds.) *Syntax and semantics 3: Speech acts*. New York: Academic Press. 41–58.
- Leech, Geoffrey 1983. *Principles of pragmatics*. London, New York: Longman Group Ltd.
- Pischlöger, Christian 2016. Udmurt on Social Network Sites: A comparison with the Welsh Case. In: Saarikivi, Janne and Toivanen, Reetta eds. *Linguistic genocide or superdiversity? New and old language diversities*. New York: Channel View Publications, 108-132.
- Searle, John R. 1975. A taxonomy of illocutionary acts. In: Gunderson, Keith (ed.): *Language, mind and knowledge*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Shirobokova, Larisa 2011. *Az udmurt–orosz kétnyelvűség (Udmurt Köztársaság, Sarkan járás, Muvyr község)* [Udmurt–Russian bilingualism (Muvyr village, Sarkan district, Udmurt Republic)]. Budapest: ELTE PhD dissertation.
- Szili, Katalin 2013 (2004). *Tetté vált szavak: A beszédaktusok elmélete és gyakorlata* [Words become acts: The theory and practice of speech acts]. Budapest: Tinta Könyvkiadó.
- Winkler, Eberhard 2001 *Udmurt*. Languages of the World/Materials 212. München: Lincom Europa.