

Focus in Udmurt: Positions, Contrastivity, and Exhaustivity¹

Erika Asztalos

The paper presents the results of three surveys examining the positions and the interpretation of foci in Udmurt. While confirming Tánčzos's (2010) findings that the most acceptable focus position is the immediately preverbal one, and that sentence-final focusing is also grammatical for a part of the speakers, the results indicate that foci, with some limitations, can also occur in some preverbal but not verb-adjacent positions. Foci associated with the exhaustive particle *gine* 'only' were highly accepted in all tested positions. From the perspective of interpretation, none of the focus positions turned out to be obligatorily contrastive or necessarily exhaustive. Sentence-initial focusing is mostly available for subjects and for dative complements. As for direct object foci, preverbal but not verb-adjacent positions are mostly accessible for personal pronouns and, more broadly, for objects marked with the accusative case suffix. The more flexible distribution of personal pronoun objects as compared to morphologically unmarked objects is presumably related to the high degree of definiteness of the former. The sentence-final focusing strategy was interpreted as a phenomenon induced by Russian influence and as a sign of the ongoing SOV-to-SVO change of Udmurt. The results also show that speakers vary considerably in their focus position preferences.

Keywords: *focus positions, word order, contrastivity, exhaustivity, Udmurt*

1 Introduction

The information structure of the Udmurt sentence is a relatively unexplored area of research, where sometimes even basic questions remain poorly understood. The present paper, which has mainly descriptive aims, addresses two principal questions: i) whether the appearance of the focused constituent is restricted in Udmurt to the immediately preverbal and the sentence-final positions (as Tánčzos 2010 claims), and ii) whether any of the positions in which foci can occur is obligatorily exhaustive and/or contrastive.

The data presented in this paper may also be relevant from a typological point of view. Traditionally, Udmurt has been classified as an SOV language, but some recent works (e.g., Tánčzos 2013, Asztalos et al. 2017, Asztalos 2018) claim that it is undergoing an SOV-to-SVO change. Since SOV and SVO languages have different focus positioning tendencies (see Cypionka 2007), it is of interest to see how contemporary Udmurt behaves with regard to focus placement.

On the basis of the results of a fieldwork study carried out by means of three consecutive questionnaires filled out by native speakers of Udmurt, the paper argues that

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besides the immediately preverbal and the sentence-final positions (cf. Tánčzos 2010), foci can also occur preverbally but not adjacent to the verb. Namely, they can precede a preverbal adverbial and/or the subject, thus occurring sentence-medially or sentence-initially. Preverbal but not verb-adjacent placement of foci is, however, sensitive to the morphosyntactic properties of the focussed element. Sentence-initial focusing resulted to be mostly available for subjects and for dative complements. As for object foci, preverbal but not verb-adjacent positions were mostly accessible for personal pronoun objects and, more broadly, for objects marked with the accusative case suffix. The more flexible distribution of personal pronoun objects (and of accusative-marked objects in general) compared to morphologically unmarked objects is presumably related to the higher degree of definiteness of the former object types.

The results indicate that exhaustively and contrastively focused items can occur in all of the tested positions, however, none of these positions is *obligatorily* exhaustive or necessarily contrastive.

Speakers seem to vary extensively in their focus position preferences and flexibility with regard to focus placement. Certain speakers clearly preferred one focus position: most frequently, the immediately preverbal one, more rarely, the “pre-adverbial” or the sentence-final one. Other speakers were more permissive, as they consistently judged as grammatical more than one focus position.

From a typological point of view, Udmurt seems to behave like an SOV language which is undergoing a change towards the SVO type: while immediately preverbal focusing as a main focusing strategy is characteristic of SOV languages, sentence-final focusing is present in SVO languages but absent in SOV languages (see Czypionka 2007). The sentence-final focus position has presumably developed in Udmurt under the influence of Russian (see also Tánčzos 2010). It is interesting, however, that sentence-initial focusing, which is also available in Russian and is, actually, the most common focusing strategy in SVO languages and is also quite common in SOV languages (see Czypionka 2007), resulted to be more marked and is subject to restrictions in Udmurt.

The paper is structured as follows. Section 2 presents background information. After discussing neutral word order(s) in Udmurt, I outline the typological tendencies of focus placement in SOV and SVO languages. Afterwards, I offer an overview of previous works on Udmurt focus, then I introduce the notions of information structure the paper relies on and provide a short overview of the Russian focus positions. Section 3 introduces the research aims and the questionnaires by means of which the research was carried out. Section 4 presents and discusses the results. 4.1 is concerned with focus placement in relation to the morphosyntactic properties of the focused element. 4.2 addresses the question whether any of the Udmurt focus positions is necessarily contrastive and/or exhaustive. 4.3 provides a speaker-internal evaluation of the results. 4.4 discusses the results from a typological point of view and deals with the question to what extent Russian may have had an influence on focus placement in Udmurt. Section 5 draws the conclusion and points out some questions left for future research.

2 Background

2.1 Neutral order of sentence constituents in Udmurt

Udmurt has traditionally been claimed to be a non-rigid SOV (or head-final) language. Thus, the neutral order has been claimed to be SOV (or SXV) at the sentence-level (1) and

modifier-head at the phrasal level, while non-verb-final sentences and head-initial phrases have been considered to be pragmatically marked (cf., e.g., Bulyčov 1947; Gavrilova 1970; Csúcs 1990; Suihkonen 1990; Vilkuna 1998; Winkler 2001, 2011; Tánczos 2010; Timerxanova 2011).²

- (1) *Saša kniga-jez' hydž-i-ž.*³
 Sasha book-ACC read-PST-3SG
 'Sasha read the book.' (Tánczos 2010: 223)

Several recent studies (Tánczos 2013; Asztalos & Tánczos 2014; Asztalos 2016, 2018; Asztalos et al. 2017), however, claim that in contemporary Udmurt, both SOV and SVO orders can be neutral. By (discourse-)neutral sentences most of these papers mean to refer to *all-new* sentences, which include, for example, text-initial sentences and sentences answering the question 'What's new?'. The example in (2), e.g., is an *all-new* sentence with SVO order.

- (2) *Ogjaulonni-ys' starosta bića podpis-jos.*
 dormitory-ELA head gather.3SG signature-PL
 'The dormitory supervisor is gathering signatures.'
 (Marajko, 25.08.2015, cited in Asztalos 2018: 79)

The authors of the cited papers assume (and their assumption will be adopted throughout the present study) that the contemporary Udmurt language is undergoing a typological change from the OV to the VO type under the influence of Russian. At the same time, it has to be noted that (S)VO order, and head-initial constituents both at the clausal and the phrasal level, are textually less frequent than (S)OV order and head-final constituents in general, and they are mainly produced and accepted by the younger generation (see Asztalos 2016, 2018).

² A typical example of pragmatically marked, non-verb-final sentences are emphatic sentences with discourse-old postverbal constituents, cf. (i) (cf. Ponarjadov 2010: 14, 23, 27):

- (i) *T'urma-yn šist-o mon ton-e!*
 prison-INE putrify-FUT.1SG 1SG 2SG-ACC
 'I will putrify you in the prison!' (Ponarjadov 2010: 27)

³ The following abbreviations are used in the glosses and tables: 1 = first person, 2 = second person, 3 = third person, Acc, ACC = accusative case, CMPR = comparative, CNG = connegative form of the verb, CVB = converb, DAT = dative case, DET = determinative suffix, ELA = elative case, FUT = future tense, ILL = illative case, IMP = imperfect, INE = inessive case, INS = instrumental-comitative case, Nom = nominative case, NEG = negative auxiliary, PL = plural, PRF = perfect, PRS = present tense, PRT = perfectivizer, PST = past tense, PTCL = particle, PTCP = participle, Q = question particle, SG = singular. Other abbreviations used in the body text and the figures are the following: Adv = adverbial, Adv_{TEMP} = temporal adverbial, Ins = noun phrase in the instrumental-comitative case, NP = noun phrase, O_{FOC}/Ofoc = focused direct object, O_{PRON} = personal pronoun object, S = subject, S_{PRON} = personal pronoun subject, V = verb, w.o. = word order. Glosses, transcriptions and (in some cases) translations of cited examples are mine.

2.2 Focus positions in SOV and SVO languages

Examining how a language undergoing an SOV-to-SVO change, like Udmurt, behaves with regard to focus placement, is not of merely descriptive interest but also has broader typological relevance, since SOV and SVO languages have different focus positioning tendencies. Cypionka (2007), in a typological study examining 112 languages, finds a correlation between unmarked (neutral, or basic) word order and focus position, stating that SOV languages are more likely to encode focus preverbally than SVO languages. In her sample, 36% of SOV languages but only 7% of SVO languages, showed a preference for the immediately preverbal focus position.⁴ On the other hand, none of the SOV languages had a sentence-final focus position, while 10% of SVO languages did have it. Postverbal focusing also resulted to be less common among SOV than among SVO languages (3% vs. 13%). Interestingly, sentence-initial focusing was available in roughly the same proportion of SOV and SVO languages (34% vs. 37%) (ibid.: 441–444).⁵

Many languages also allowed for other focus positions in addition to the most common one. Thus, for most of the languages, *in situ* focusing was also an option (ibid.: 441). Furthermore, for the majority of SOV languages with a preference for immediately preverbal focusing, the existence of a sentence-initial focus position is not explicitly excluded by the grammars consulted by the author. Similarly, the possibility of immediately preverbal focusing is not excluded for most SOV languages having a sentence-initial focus position (2007: 443). As for SVO languages, the postverbal focus position also often co-occurs with an alternative sentence-initial focus position (2007: 444).

Cypionka (2007) also deals with the question whether subject and non-subject foci show different positioning tendencies, and finds that when focus marking involves movement in a language (i.e., the placement of the focused item into a dedicated position as opposed to *in situ* focusing), subject and non-subject foci are moved to the same position (2007: 439, 443).

To sum up, Cypionka's (2007) data reveal that SOV and SVO languages show the following tendencies with regard to focus placement:

- Immediately preverbal focusing is more typical of SOV than of SVO languages.
- Sentence-final and postverbal focusing is more frequent in SVO than in SOV languages.
- Sentence-initial focusing is roughly as common in SOV as in SVO languages.
- Many languages have more than one focusing strategy.

⁴ In fact, those 7% include only two languages, which, as Cypionka (ibid.: 5) points out, are not even entirely clear regarding this feature. In any case, immediately preverbal focusing does not seem to be a property of SVO languages specifically.

⁵ Verb-initial (VSO, OVS) and object-initial (OSV, OVS) languages typically have a sentence-initial focus position in Cypionka's sample, but, as the number of these languages is much lower in the sample than the number of SOV and SVO languages, the author does not consider the results for the former languages as reliable as for the latter (Cypionka 2007: 445).

2.3 Previous works on Udmurt focus

Early grammars and works on Udmurt syntax contain some observations about the placement of so-called “logically stressed” constituents (in Russian, *logičeski udarjaemoe slovo*). Although the authors do not specify what they exactly mean by logically stressed constituents, on the basis of the usual interpretation of the term in the literature and the provided examples it is feasible that they refer by the term to constituents fulfilling a focus-like function.

The opinions concerning the placement of these items partly differ. Glezdenev (1921: 15, 45) and Baushev (1929: 10) claim that logically stressed elements immediately precede the predicate. Thus, in the sentence in (3), logical stress falls on the direct object *iz korka* ‘stone house’, which is in immediately preverbal position. For emphasizing another element of the sentence, e.g., the adverbial *tolon* ‘yesterday’, or the subject *vuž karis* ‘tradesman’, the order of the sentence has to be altered so that the emphasized element immediately precede the verb (Glezdenev 1921: 45).

- (3) *Tolon vuž kar-is kar-yn IZ KORKA bašt-i-ž.*⁶
 yesterday product make-PTCP.IMP city-INE stone house buy-PST-3SG
 ‘Yesterday the tradesman bought A STONE HOUSE in the city. / It was a stone house that the tradesman bought yesterday in the city.’ (Glezdenev 1921: 45)

Žujkov (1937: 18), however, provides examples in which logically stressed constituents are placed sentence-initially, without being immediately preverbal (4):

- (4) a. TUNNE *mon žavod-e myn-o.*
 today 1SG factory-ILL go-FUT.1SG
 ‘It is today that I will go to the factory.’
 b. ZAVOD-E *tunne mon myn-o.*
 factory-ILL today 1SG go-FUT.1SG
 ‘It is to the factory that I will go today.’
 c. MON *tunne žavod-e myn-o.*
 1SG today factory-ILL go-FUT.1SG
 ‘It is me who will go to the factory today.’ (Žujkov 1937: 18)

According to Bulyčov (1947: 77), logically stressed constituents can occur sentence-initially or stay in their “ordinary” position (1947: 78) (by which he probably means neutral or *in situ* position). Konjuxova (1964: 6) claims that logical stress can fall on any constituent of the sentence without entailing constituent reordering, which equals saying that constituents can be focused in their neutral position. Thus, the sentence in (5) may express different meanings depending on which constituent is logically stressed.

- (5) a. PINAL-JOS *kolhoz-yn už-a-žy.*
 child-PL kolkhoz-INE work-PST.3PL
 ‘It is the children who have worked in the kolkhoz.’

⁶ Focused constituents are marked by small capitals throughout the whole study.

- b. *Pinaljos KOLHOZYN užazy.*
‘It is in the kolkhoz that children have worked.’
- c. *Pinaljos kolbožyn UŽAZY.*
‘Work was what children have done in the kolkhoz.’ (Konjuxova 1964: 6)

Summing up, early works mention three possible positions for logically stressed items: i) immediately preverbal, ii) sentence-initial and iii) neutral (*in situ*) position.

The first paper offering a thorough analysis of focus placement in Udmurt is written by Tánčzos (2010). According to her, topic and focus are structurally marked in the language. The topic position is sentence-initial and recursive (ibid.: 219). The focus position, which is not recursive, immediately precedes the predicate in the standard variety of Udmurt (6a), while it is sentence-final in a non-standard variety of the language (6b) (ibid.: 219). The author attributes the development of sentence-final foci in Udmurt to the influence of Russian (ibid.: 222), as in Russian, information foci are located sentence-finally (cf. Bailyn 2012: 275–278).

- (6) Context: ‘What did Sasha see in the cinema?’
- a. *Saša kinol'eatr-yn T'ERMINATOR-EZ ućk-i-ž.*
Sasha cinema-INE Terminator-ACC watch-PST-3SG
- b. *Saša kinol'eatr-yn ućk-i-ž T'ERMINATOR-EZ.*
Sasha cinema-INE watch-PST-3SG Terminator-ACC
- ‘It is the Terminator that Sasha saw in the cinema.’ (Tánčzos 2010: 225)

However, other papers (Vilkuna 1998; Timerxanova 2006, 2011; Asztalos 2012) suggest that the possibilities of focus placement are not limited to the immediately preverbal and the sentence-final positions. Vilkuna (1998: 195) claims that “focus does not appear to be positionally restricted” in Udmurt, and that the preverbal position is a frequent but not exclusive position for focused elements:

“The (...) Udmurt preverbal position seems to be a neutral and frequent focus and WH position, but this does not prohibit the placement of WH items and exhaustive foci elsewhere. (...) It seems that when the neutral position of a constituent is preverbal, it will remain there when focused, but, for example, a subject is not necessarily placed in this position for focusing purposes” (ibid.).

Timerxanova (2006), similarly to Žujkov (1937) and Bulyčov (1947), claims that logically stressed items are placed sentence-initially. In a later paper (Timerxanova 2011), however, she associates more than one order – namely, SVO (7a), OVS (7b) and OSV (7c) – with object focusing, which implies that besides the sentence-initial position, she also designates a sentence-final and an immediately preverbal focus position, at least for direct object foci:

- (7) a. *Mon adž-is'ko N'ULES-EZ.*
1SG see-PRS.1SG forest-ACC
- b. *N'ULES-EZ adž-is'ko mon.*
forest-ACC see-PRS.1SG 1SG
- c. *N'ULES-EZ mon adž-is'ko.*
forest-ACC 1SG see-PRS.1SG
- ‘It is the forest that I see.’ (Timerxanova 2011: 183)

Asztalos (2012) presents the results of a small-scale experiment that tested the possible positions of direct object foci in two contexts, contrastive and non-contrastive (examples below are given in a non-contrastive context). Independently of whether the context was contrastive or not, the position accepted by most speakers was the immediately preverbal one (8a). However, sentence-final object foci (8b), as well as object foci preceding the verb *non-immediately* (8c) were also allowed by some speakers. Marginally, sentence-initial (8d) and postverbal but not sentence-final (8e) object foci were also accepted. No difference between the placement of contrastive and non-contrastive foci was found (Asztalos 2012: 10–11).

(8) Context: ‘What did Vova drink yesterday?’

- a. *Vova tolon* SUR *ju-i-ž*.
Vova yesterday beer drink-PST-3SG
- b. %*Vova tolon ju-i-ž* SUR.
Vova yesterday drink-PST-3SG beer
- c. %*Vova* SUR *tolon ju-i-ž*.
Vova beer yesterday drink-PST-3SG
- d. %/?SUR *Vova tolon ju-i-ž*.
beer Vova yesterday drink-PST-3SG
- e. %/?*Vova ju-i-ž* SUR *tolon*.
Vova drink-PST-3SG beer yesterday

‘It was beer that Vova drank yesterday.’ (on the basis of Asztalos 2012: 10)

In (8c), a temporal adverbial, whereas in (8d), the subject and a temporal adverbial stand between the focused object and the verb. As a matter of fact, Tánčzos (2010) also makes a brief observation (2010: 222), which implies that some of her respondents may have allowed the adverbial to appear between the focused element and the verb, but the author does not go into detail about this.⁷

To sum up, while the most comprehensive work on Udmurt focus (Tánčzos 2010) posits two focus positions (immediately preverbal in the standard variety and sentence-final in a non-standard variety of the language), other works (Žujkov 1937; Bulyčov 1947; Konjuxova 1964; Vilkuňa 1998; Timerxanova 2006, 2011 and Asztalos 2012) suggest that focus placement is not restricted to these two specific positions: instead focused phrases may occasionally occur sentence-initially, in a postverbal but not sentence-final position, or they may stay *in situ*, i.e. in their canonical position.

2.4 Terminology

This section introduces the key concepts that are relevant for the present study. Focus, along with its different subtypes, has been defined in a number of ways in linguistics. The present paper mainly relies on the definitions of É. Kiss (1998), who makes a distinction between two main focus types, *information focus* and *identificational focus*. Two semantic features, *exhaustivity* and *contrastivity*, that cross-linguistically may optionally or obligatorily

⁷ ‘(...) in most cases, most of the speakers do not allow the adverbial to stand between the focused element and the verb’ (Tánčzos 2010: 222; translation mine).

be associated with foci, are also relevant for the purposes of this study. Additionally, the paper also refers to the notion of *corrective focus*.

Information focus, as defined by É. Kiss (1998), “conveys new, non-presupposed information [...] without expressing exhaustive identification” (É. Kiss 1998: 246). E.g., in the Hungarian sentence in (9), the constituent *egy kalapot* ‘a hat’ introduces new, non-presupposed information, and thus fulfils the role of information focus. The sentence does not imply that everything Mary picked for herself was a hat: the predicate can potentially hold for other elements, too.

- (9) Context: John and Mary are shopping.
Mari ki-néz-ett magá-nak EGY KALAP-OT.
 Mary out-watch-PST.3SG herself-DAT a hat-ACC
 ‘Mary picked for herself a hat.’ (É. Kiss 1998: 249) (Hungarian)

Information foci typically appear *in situ* (or, in other words, in their base-generated position) (É. Kiss 1998: 249).

Identificational focus, on the other hand, identifies the exhaustive subset of “contextually or situationally given elements for which the predicate phrase [...] actually holds” (É. Kiss 1998: 245), and, according to É. Kiss’s (1998) analysis, it involves a specific structural position in a functional projection of the sentence. Thus, the English sentence in (10) and its Hungarian counterpart in (11) imply that from among various pieces of clothes, Mary picked for herself a hat, and she did not pick anything else (É. Kiss 1998: 249.) Exhaustivity is thus a semantic property of identificational focus in both languages. In English, identificational focus is realized via the cleft construction *It is...* (10), while in Hungarian identificational foci occupy the position immediately preceding the verb (11).

- (10) *It was a hat that Mary picked for herself.*
 (11) *Mari EGY KALAP-OT néz-ett ki magá-nak.*
 Mary a hat-ACC watch-PST.3SG out herself-DAT
 ‘It was a hat that Mary picked for herself.’ (É. Kiss 1998: 249) (Hungarian)

Cross-linguistically, identificational focus can be obligatorily or optionally contrastive. A focus, according to É. Kiss (1998: 267), is contrastive if “it operates on a closed set of entities whose members are known to the participants of the discourse”. Thus, in the case of contrastive foci, “the identification of a subset of the given set also identifies the contrasting complementary subset” (ibid.). Identificational focus is obligatorily contrastive, for example, in Italian: the answer sentence in (12c) with sentence-initial identificational focus is only grammatical if it operates on a context with a closed set of possible entities known to the participants of the discourse (É. Kiss 1998: 269). Thus, the sentence in (12c) (which is equal to (13b)) is grammatical as an answer to the questions in (12a–b), but it is ungrammatical in the context of (13a), as the latter is a simple *wh*-question, which is a context with an open set of entities.

- (12) a. *Chi di voi due ha rotto il vaso?*
 which of 2PL two have.3SG break.PTCP.PRF the vase
 ‘Which one of you two broke the vase?’

- b. *L' ha rotto Giorgio, il vaso?*
 it.ACC have.3SG break.PTCP.PRF George the vase
 'Did George break the vase?'
- c. *MARIA ha rotto il vaso.*
 Mary have.3SG break.PTCP.PRF the vase
 'It is Mary who broke the vase.' (É. Kiss 1998: 269) (Italian)
- (13) a. *Chi ha rotto il vaso?*
 who have.3SG break.PTCP.PRF the vase
 'Who broke the vase?'
- b. **MARIA ha rotto il vaso.*
 Mary have.3SG break.PTCP.PRF the vase
 'It is Maria who broke the vase.' (ibid.) (Italian)

In English and in Hungarian, the position reserved for identificational foci is not necessarily contrastive, which means that it can host both contrastive and non-contrastive items. The Hungarian example in (14) illustrates that the sentence in (14c) can be given as an answer both to a question with a closed set of entities known to the participants of the discourse (14a) (contrastive context), and to a simple *wh*-question, which operates on an open set of entities (14b) (non-contrastive context) (É. Kiss 1998: 267–268).

- (14) a. *Mari egy kalap-ot vagy egy sál-at néz-ett ki magá-nak?*
 Mary a hat-ACC or a scarf-ACC watch-PST.3SG out herself-DAT
 'Did Mary pick for herself a hat or a scarf?'
- b. *Mit néz-ett ki magá-nak Mari?*
 what watch-PST.3SG out herself-DAT Mary
 'What did Mary pick for herself?'
- c. *Mari EGY KALAP-OT néz-ett ki magá-nak.*
 Mary a hat-ACC watch-PST.3SG out herself-DAT
 'It was a hat that Mary picked for herself.' (Hungarian)

It is important to note that even if in a given language like Italian identificational focus is obligatorily contrastive, this does not imply that foci which occur in a contrastive context are obligatorily moved into the identificational focus position in that language. In fact, contrastively focused items in many languages can also stay *in situ*, and/or occur in the position where information foci are placed in the language. This is illustrated by the Italian example in (15c), which can also be given as a grammatical and congruent answer to the questions in (12a–b) (repeated here as (15a–b)).

- (15) a. *Chi di voi due ha rotto il vaso?*
 which of 2PL two have.3SG break.PTCP.PRF the vase
 'Which one of you two broke the vase?'
- b. *L' ha rotto Giorgio, il vaso?*
 it.ACC have.3SG break.PTCP.PRF George the vase
 'Did George break the vase?'
- c. *Il vaso, l' ha rotto MARIA.*
 the vase it.ACC have.3SG break.PTCP.PRF Mary
 'It is Maria who broke the vase.' (É. Kiss 1998: 269) (Italian)

To put it another way, information foci, in an appropriate context, can also be used contrastively, cf. (15c), but as opposed to identificational foci they are never associated with an *obligatorily* contrastive reading (recall that the main function of information foci is to introduce new, non-presupposed information). Surányi's (2011) study suggests that the situation is somewhat analogous to the exhaustivity of information foci in Hungarian. As stated at the beginning of this section, the Hungarian sentence in (9) (repeated here as (16)), with the constituent *egy kalapot* 'a hat' fulfilling the role of information focus, does not imply that Mary only picked a hat for herself. However, it does not explicitly *exclude* the possibility that Mary only picked for herself a hat: the sentence might well be continued, e.g., by a sentence which means 'She bought it immediately and then they left', which would in fact suggest that she didn't buy anything else.

- (16) Context: John and Mary are shopping.
Mari ki-néz-ett magá-nak EGY KALAP-OT.
 Mary out-watch-PST.3SG herself-DAT a hat-ACC
 'Mary picked for herself a hat.' (É. Kiss 1998: 249) (Hungarian)

Thus, it might be appropriate to state that, as opposed to identificational focus, information focus *by itself* does not provide information about the exhaustivity of the focussed element (it does not encode exhaustivity semantically), but such information, in some cases, might be inferred pragmatically from the context. Thus, information foci can be associated with *pragmatic* exhaustivity (see Surányi 2011: 292–295). This is to be distinguished from the context-independent, semantically encoded type of exhaustivity presented above in relation to identificational foci. The present study is concerned with this latter type of exhaustivity in Udmurt.

It has to be noted that the context in (12b–c), which is considered by É. Kiss (1998) a contrastive one, is, in fact, a so-called *correction*. Foci used in corrections are often regarded in the literature as instances of a distinct (sub)type of focus, *corrective focus*. However, as there is also a long-standing tradition of using corrections as a means for the elicitation of contrastive foci (see Repp 2016: 280–281, 283), in this paper I will consider corrective focus as a subtype of contrastive focus.

2.5 Focus positions in Russian

Udmurt is subject to strong Russian influence. According to Salánki's (2007) sociolinguistic study, 98% of Udmurt speakers are bilingual and speak both Udmurt and Russian (Salánki 2007: 81). However, generations differ concerning their competence in Udmurt and Russian (*ibid.*: 89, 205): while older Udmurts are usually Udmurt-dominant speakers and middle-aged speakers typically have an equal command of Udmurt and Russian (*ibid.*: 82), the young generation frequently has higher proficiency in Russian than in Udmurt (that is, they are either balanced or Russian-dominant bilinguals) (*ibid.*: 82, 85).

Russian influence can be detected at every linguistic level in Udmurt (Csúcs 1990: 21). Morphosyntactic phenomena induced by Russian influence include, among others, the usage of plural forms after numerals, number agreement on attributive adjectives, the usage of Russian conjunctions and complementizers, the spreading of finite subordination to the detriment of non-finite subordination, etc. (see Salánki 2007: 158–185). The ongoing SOV-to-SVO change of Udmurt has also been attributed (at least partly) to the influence of Russian (see Asztalos et al. 2017; Asztalos 2018). From this general perspective, it may be of interest to examine whether Russian may have had an impact on the focusing

strategies of Udmurt. Thus, in what follows I will give an overview of the Russian focus positions and their interpretation on the basis of the related literature.

Foci in Russian may occur sentence-finally or preverbally. Sentence-final foci (17) have been analysed as information foci by King (1995), Neeleman & Titov (2009), Dyakonova (2009), Titov (2012), and Bailyn (2012).

- (17) Context: ‘Who is reading the book?’
Knigu čita-jet IVAN.
 book.ACC read-3SG Ivan
 ‘It is Ivan who is reading the book.’ (Bailyn 2012: 276) (Russian)

As introduced in the previous subsection, cross-linguistically information foci are not associated with an *obligatory* contrastive or exhaustive reading, but optionally, in an appropriate context, they may have such readings. This is also true for Russian sentence-final information foci, as Dyakonova (2009: 67–68) shows.

As for Russian preverbal foci, Dyakonova (2009: 64) points out that they can occur in three distinct positions (at least in colloquial Russian): they can precede the verb immediately (18a), occur in the middle-field but not adjacent to the verb (18b), or appear sentence-initially (18c):

- (18) a. *Oni emu ŠČENKA podarili.*
 3PL 3SG.DAT puppy.ACC give.PST.3PL
 b. *Oni ŠČENKA emu podarili.*
 3PL puppy.ACC 3SG.DAT give.PST.3PL
 c. *ŠČENKA oni emu podarili.*
 puppy.ACC 3PL 3SG.DAT give.PST.3PL
 ‘They gave him a PUPPY.’ (Dyakonova 2009: 64) (Russian)

Whether preverbal foci in Russian are necessarily contrastive and/or exhaustive is a matter of some dispute. King (1995) and Titov (2012: 272–282) claim that they are necessarily contrastive. Neeleman & Titov (2009) discuss sentence-initial foci and regard them as contrastive. However, Dyakonova (2009) and Bailyn (2012) argue that preverbal foci are not necessarily contrastive, nor are they obligatorily exhaustive, as they may also occur in non-contrastive contexts, e.g., as answers to *wh*-questions (Dyakonova 2009: 71–73; Bailyn 2012: 281–282).

Summing up, foci can occur sentence-finally or preverbally in Russian. Preverbal foci can be left-adjacent to the verb, sentence-initial, or occur in the middle-field but not adjacent to the verb. Sentence-final foci are instances of information focus. All positions can host contrastive foci and none of them is necessarily exhaustive. There is no consensus on whether preverbal foci are necessarily contrastive, but the fact that they can also answer *wh*-questions suggests that they are not associated with an obligatorily contrastive reading.

3 Research aims and the questionnaires

The primary goal of the fieldwork study presented in this paper was to test to what extent native speakers of Udmurt accept sentence-initial, non-immediately preverbal and postverbal (but not sentence-final) foci compared to immediately preverbal and sentence-final ones (identified by Tánzos 2010), and to reveal whether focus placement is

influenced by the syntactic function and, in case of direct object foci, the morphological marking and the lexical subcategory (noun/personal pronoun) of the focused item. Second, the investigations aimed at examining whether any of the focus positions is associated in Udmurt with an obligatorily contrastive or exhaustive reading. The third aim was to compare the revealed properties of Udmurt foci with those of the Russian preverbal and sentence-final focus positions, and to check to what extent focus placement and focus interpretation in Udmurt may be influenced by Russian.

The research was carried out by means of three consecutive questionnaires (hereinafter: Questionnaire 1, 2 and 3) that were compiled and filled out, respectively, in 2013, 2014 and 2016. Questionnaire 1 and 2 were filled out each by 12 native speakers of Udmurt, who were mainly employees and students of the Udmurt State University. Questionnaire 3, which was designed together with Katalin É. Kiss (and first reported in Asztalos & É. Kiss 2016), was an online survey sent out through the social networking sites *Facebook* and *Vkontakte*. In the latter survey, 36 complete and 24 incomplete responses were collected.⁸

Questionnaire 1 concentrated exclusively on direct object foci. Udmurt has differential object marking: non-specific direct objects are morphologically unmarked (formally identical to the nominative), whereas specific objects (including personal pronouns) are accusative-marked (see É. Kiss & Tánzos 2018: 738–739, 752–753). Questionnaire 1 aimed at examining whether the placement of object foci is influenced by their morphological marking and/or lexical subcategory (proper noun vs. personal pronoun). This question may be legitimate because Vilkuna's (1998) results point to a possible relationship between the morphological marking and the position of direct objects (for more on this, see Section 4.1.3 below). The related questionnaire items consisted of *wh*-questions and a set of possible answer sentences associated to each question, as illustrated by the examples in Appendix A and their glossed and translated version in (19)–(20). For each *wh*-question, the respondents had to choose from the related list all those sentences that, in their opinion, can figure as grammatical and congruent answers to the question. The *wh*-questions contained (besides the *wh*-element) a subject (S), a locative adverbial (Adv), and a verb (V). The answer sentences contained the same elements as the *wh*-questions, except for the object, which was realized in the answers by a noun phrase or a personal pronoun (which was interpreted as a focus, labelled O_{FOC}). The only difference between the possible answer sentences belonging to one question consisted in the order of the constituents, and especially in the position of the focused object.

In order to help the respondents to keep in mind that it is the direct object that has to be elicited by the questions, the object was written with capital letters and a photo illustrating it was attached to the answer sentences (see Appendix A). The answer sentences appeared in randomized order within each item.

- (19) *Mar Lera magažin-yś bašt-i-ž?*
 what Lera grocery-ELA buy-PST-3SG
 ‘What did Lera buy at the grocery?’

⁸ The sets of respondents of Questionnaire 1 and Questionnaire 2 partly overlapped. None of the questionnaires contained filler items, and respondents were not compensated for their participation in the survey(s).

- (20) a. *Lera* KUREG *magaşin-yş* *başt-i-z*. (SO_{FOC}AdvV)
 Lera chicken grocery-ELA buy-PST-3SG
- b. *Lera magaşin-yş* *başt-i-z* KUREG. (SAdvVO_{FOC})
 Lera grocery-ELA buy-PST-3SG chicken
- c. *Lera magaşin-yş* KUREG *başt-i-z*. (SAdvO_{FOC}V)
 Lera grocery-ELA chicken buy-PST-3SG
- d. KUREG *Lera magaşin-yş* *başt-i-z*. (O_{FOC}SAdvV)
 chicken Lera grocery-ELA buy-PST-3SG
- e. *Lera başt-i-z* *magaşin-yş* KUREG. (SVAdvO_{FOC})
 Lera buy-PST-3SG grocery-ELA chicken
- f. *Lera başt-i-z* KUREG *magaşin-yş*. (SVO_{FOC}Adv)
 Lera buy-PST-3SG chicken grocery-ELA
- Intended meaning: ‘It is chicken that Lera bought at the grocery.’

The placement of contrastive foci was tested with alternative *wh*-questions of the type *What did Lera buy at the grocery, chicken or duck?* This type of question is called “interrogative discourse with alternative question”, and it is identified by Repp (2016: 281) as one of the tests commonly used for the elicitation of contrastive foci. The related answer sentences were completed by a clause negating one of the objects, and the negated object was illustrated by a photo that was crossed out. This is illustrated by the examples in Appendix B and their glossed version in (21)–(22).

- (21) *Mar Lera magaşin-yş* *başt-i-z*, *kureg jake* *çöş?*
 what Lera grocery-ELA buy-PST-3SG chicken or duck
 ‘What did Lera buy at the grocery, chicken or duck?’
- (22) a. *Lera magaşin-yş* KUREG *başt-i-z*, *çöş* *öş* *baştı*.
 Lera grocery-ELA chicken buy-PST-3SG duck NEG.PST.3 buy.CNG.SG
 (SAdvO_{FOC}V)
- b. *Lera magaşin-yş* *başt-i-z* KUREG, *çöş* *öş* *baştı*.
 Lera grocery-ELA buy-PST-3SG chicken duck NEG.PST.3 buy.CNG.SG
 (SAdvVO_{FOC})
- c. KUREG *Lera magaşin-yş* *başt-i-z*, *çöş* *öş* *baştı*.
 chicken Lera grocery-ELA buy-PST-3SG duck NEG.PST.3 buy.CNG.SG
 (O_{FOC}SAdvV)
- d. *Lera başt-i-z* KUREG *magaşin-yş*, *çöş* *öş* *baştı*.
 Lera buy-PST-3SG chicken grocery-ELA duck NEG.PST.3 buy.CNG.SG
 (SVO_{FOC}Adv)
- e. *Lera* KUREG *magaşin-yş* *başt-i-z*, *çöş* *öş* *baştı*.
 Lera chicken grocery-ELA buy-PST-3SG duck NEG.PST.3 buy.CNG.SG
 (SO_{FOC}AdvV)

- (23) Focus positions tested in Questionnaire 1:
- a. immediately preverbal (SAdvO_{FOC}V order)
 - b. non-immediately preverbal:
 - i. preceding a locative adverbial (SO_{FOC}AdvV)
 - ii. sentence-initial, preceding the subject and the locative adverbial (O_{FOC}SAdvV)
 - c. sentence-final (SVAdvO_{FOC} and SAdvVO_{FOC})¹¹
 - d. postverbal but not sentence-final (SVO_{FOC}Adv)

Questionnaire 2 was also mainly concerned with direct object foci. The main aim of this survey was to test whether any of the positions is associated with an obligatorily contrastive and/or exhaustive reading. The following focus positions and permutations of S, O_{FOC} and V were examined:

- (24) Focus positions tested in Questionnaire 2:
- a. immediately preverbal (SO_{FOC}V)
 - b. non-immediately preverbal:
 - i. preceding a locative adverbial (SO_{FOC}AdvV)
 - ii. sentence-initial, preceding the subject (O_{FOC}SV)
 - c. sentence-final (SVO_{FOC})

The respondents had to evaluate on a rating scale (*good/odd/incorrect*) the grammaticality of sentences constituting short dialogues, and they had to correct the sentences that they found odd or unacceptable. Both the focus-eliciting sentences and the sentences containing the focused item itself had to be evaluated (and corrected in case they were found odd or ungrammatical), but for the purposes of the present study only judgements on the latter will be taken into consideration (even if the focus eliciting context also contained a focused element).

The contrastive test contexts were corrections like the dialogue presented in (25) (the focused element is immediately preverbal in the example, but all of the positions listed in (24) were tested):

- (25) – *Nadja Saša-jez=a byrj-i-ž?*
 Nadja Sasha-ACC=Q choose-PST-3SG
 ‘Did Nadja choose Sasha?’
 – *Öž so VOLOD’A-JEZ byrj-i-ž.*
 NEG.PST.3 3SG Volodja-ACC choose-PST-3SG
 Intended meaning: ‘No, it was Volodja whom she chose.’

Exhaustivity was tested by means of the exhaustive identification test applied by É. Kiss (1998) to Hungarian, cf. (26)–(27). According to É. Kiss, the dialogue is felicitous only if negation in sentence (b) can be interpreted as the negation of the exhaustivity of the

¹¹ Thus, sentence-final foci were tested in two contexts, with the adverbial either preceding or following the verb. The purpose of this was to lower the possibility that speakers reject a variant with sentence-final focus only because of the position of the adverbial. The two word order variants were then collapsed into a single option of “sentence-final focus” at the speaker-internal evaluation of the results, see Section 4.3.

focused element of the sentence in (a) (É. Kiss 1998: 251). Thus, according to É. Kiss (1998), (26) is a felicitous dialogue while (27) is not, and *egy kalapot* ‘a hat’ fulfils the role of exhaustive identificational focus in (26b) (which occupies the immediately preverbal position in Hungarian), whereas it is a non-exhaustive information focus in (27b) (which is postverbal in Hungarian).

- (26) a. *Mari* EGY KALAP-OT *néz-ett* *ki* *magá-nak*.
 Mary a hat-ACC watch-PST.3SG out herself-DAT
 ‘It was a hat that Mary picked for herself.’
 b. *Nem, egy kabát-ot is ki-néz-ett*.
 no, a coat-ACC too out-look-PST.3SG
 ‘No, she picked a coat, too.’ (É. Kiss 1998: 251) (Hungarian)
- (27) a. *Mari ki-néz-ett magá-nak* EGY KALAP-OT.
 Mary out-watch-PST.3SG herself-DAT a hat-ACC
 ‘Mary picked for herself a hat.’ (É. Kiss 1998: 249)
 b. #*Nem, egy kabát-ot is ki-néz-ett*.
 no a coat-ACC too out-look-PST.3SG
 ‘No, she picked a coat, too.’ (É. Kiss 1998: 251) (Hungarian)

At this point it has to be noted that the above exhaustivity test is not entirely reliable: not every speaker of Hungarian agrees that (26) is a felicitous dialogue (see also Onea & Beaver 2011).¹²

The dialogue in (28) illustrates the test for Udmurt as in the questionnaire (the focused element is sentence-final in the example, but again all of the positions listed in (24) were tested):

- (28) – *Ljuba jarat-e* ARTUR-EZ.
 Ljuba love-3SG Arthur-ACC
 Intended meaning: ‘Ljuba loves ARTHUR.’/‘It is Arthur whom Ljuba loves.’
 – *Ug, so jarat-e Artjom-ez no*.
 NEG.3SG 3SG love-3SG Artjom-ACC too
 Intended meaning: ‘No, she loves Artjom, too.’

Further questionnaire items consisted of dialogues that were similar to the above one with the exception that they also contained the focus particle *gine* ‘only’ (which follows the focused element). Thus, while in (28) the exhaustive interpretation was meant to arise solely from the context, in (29a), exhaustivity was lexically marked, as well. Again, all of the positions mentioned in (24) were tested.

- (29) – *Ljuba jarat-e* ARTUR-EZ GINE.
 Ljuba love-3SG Arthur-ACC only
 Intended meaning: ‘It is only Arthur whom Ljuba loves.’

¹² As an anonymous reviewer points out, this is likely to be due to the fact that exhaustivity is not asserted but presupposed content in these dialogues, and presuppositions cannot be negated directly, as they need a move like “Hey, wait a minute” (see von Stechow 2004).

- *Ug, so jarat-e Art'om-ez no.*
 NEG.3SG 3SG love-3SG Artjom-ACC too
 Intended meaning: ‘No, she loves Artjom, too.’

The third and most comprehensive questionnaire (Questionnaire 3) (cf. Asztalos & É. Kiss 2016) was concerned with the focus positions which are most often made reference to in the literature, i.e., the immediately preverbal, sentence-final and sentence-initial positions (cf. Section 2.3). The aim of the questionnaire was to test, on the one hand, whether focus placement is influenced by the syntactic function of the focused element. For that, subject, direct object, dative, instrumental-comitative and temporal adverbial foci were tested. The respondents had to give their grammaticality judgements of the test sentences on a 5-point Likert scale (where 5 meant ‘perfectly acceptable’ and 1 stood for ‘unacceptable’).

Contexts eliciting non-contrastive foci were *wh*-questions and sentences containing a superlative adjunct construed with one of the constituents of the sentence, see e.g. (30). Superlative adjuncts, in fact, entail the presence of a focused item in the sentence (see F. Farkas & É. Kiss 2000).

- (30) Context: ‘Yesterday a beauty contest was organized at the Philharmonia Concert Hall.’
 (VIKTORIJA PUŠINA-LY) *žuri* (VIKTORIJA PUŠINA-LY) *tuž-ges no*
 Victoria Pushina-DAT jury V.P.-DAT very-CMPR PTCL
tros ball sot-i-z (VIKTORIJA PUŠINA-LY).¹³
 many score give-PST-3SG V.P.-DAT
 Intended meaning: ‘The jury gave the highest score TO VICTORIA PUSHINA.’

Questionnaire 3 was also concerned with exhaustive and contrastive foci. Contrastive contexts included alternative questions like the one in (31), and corrections similar to (25) and (32).

- (31) – *Ku ton Votkinsk-e košk-o-d, čukaže=a jake*
 when 2SG Votkinsk-ILL leave-FUT-2SG tomorrow=Q or
čukaže uly-sa=a?
 tomorrow be-CVB=Q
 ‘When are you leaving for Votkinsk, tomorrow or the day after?’
 – (ČUKAŽE) *mon Votkinsk-e* (ČUKAŽE) *košk-o* (ČUKAŽE).
 tomorrow 1SG Votkinsk-ILL tomorrow leave-FUT.1SG tomorrow
 Intended meaning: ‘I will leave for Votkinsk TOMORROW.’ / ‘It is tomorrow that I will leave for Votkinsk.’

- (32) – *Tunne mi'emby kyrža-lo-z Anna.*
 today 1PL.DAT sing-FUT-3SG Anne
 ‘Today ANNE will sing for us.’

¹³ Here and henceforth, examples in which the same element occurs in brackets in different positions illustrate the distribution of a *single* occurrence of that element.

- $U_{\text{NEG.FUT.3SG}}$ (D'IANA) *tunne* (D'IANA) *mil'emly* *kyrʒa-lo-ʒ* (D'IANA).
 NEG.FUT.3SG Diana today D. 1PL.DAT sing-FUT-3SG D.
 Intended meaning: ‘No, today DIANA will sing for us.’ / ‘No, it is Diana who will sing for us today.’

Exhaustivity was tested by checking the meaning of numerically modified noun phrases. According to É. Kiss (2006), numerals in natural languages have an ‘at least *n*’ meaning unless they are “associated with a particular structural position with an encoded [+exhaustive] feature”, in which case they have an ‘exactly *n*’ reading, as illustrated by the Hungarian examples in (33)–(34). (In (34), the postverbal position of the verbal prefix indicates that the numerically modified phrase occupies the immediately preverbal focus position.)

- (33) *János 15 palacsintá-t meg-esz-ik.*
 John 15 pancake-ACC PRT-eat-3SG
 ‘John eats (at least) 15 pancakes.’ (É. Kiss 2006: 447) (Hungarian)
- (34) *János 15 palacsintá-t esz-ik meg.*
 John 15 pancake-ACC eat-3SG PRT
 ‘John eats (exactly) 15 pancakes.’ (ibid.) (Hungarian)

The meaning of numerically modified items was also tested in each of the above mentioned positions (sentence-initial, immediately preverbal, and sentence-final). Respondents had to answer questions like the one presented in (35):

- (35) A professor says: “Who scores 91 points at the exam is going to receive a present.” Now, Kostja had 100 points. Is he going to get a present?

Every “no” answer was interpreted as an ‘exactly *n*’ interpretation of the numeral (by virtue of $100 \neq 91$), while “yes” answers were taken to be ‘at least *n*’ interpretations (by virtue of $100 > 91$).¹⁴

It has to be noted that a shortcoming of all three questionnaires is that they only contained non-neutral sentences, that is, they did not test the word orders under discussion in neutral baseline sentences. As a reviewer points out, the results presented in Section 4 would be better interpretable when compared to results received for neutral sentences.

In the next section, I am going to present the results of the questionnaires following a thematic classification (i.e., not the chronology of the tests). In 4.1.1, I will discuss to what extent focus placement is determined by the syntactic function of the focused constituent. In 4.1.2–4.1.4, I will turn to direct object foci and to the question whether two factors, namely, morphological marking and the lexical subcategory of the focused object plays any role in focus placement. In 4.2, I will deal with the semantic features of exhaustivity and contrastivity. In 4.3, I will provide a speaker-internal evaluation of the results.

¹⁴ However, it has to be noted that extralinguistic factors (general knowledge about the world) may have had an impact on speakers’ answers: in fact, the typical situation is that when a smaller achievement is being rewarded a bigger one is also rewarded.

4 Results and discussion

4.1 Focus placement and morphosyntactic properties of the focused element

4.1.1 Syntactic function

As mentioned in Section 3, Questionnaire 3 (cf. Asztalos & É. Kiss 2016) tested the grammaticality of the immediately preverbal, sentence-final and sentence-initial focus positions in relation to the syntactic function and certain morphosyntactic properties of the focused element. Proper noun subject foci, definite (morphologically marked) and non-specific indefinite (morphologically unmarked) direct object foci, as well as proper noun dative, instrumental-comitative, and temporal adverbial foci were examined by means of different questionnaire items. The test sentences belonging to one item differed only in the position of the focused element. For each test sentence (containing the focused element in a given position) the average rating given by the speakers on the 5-point Likert scale was calculated. Table 2 shows the lowest and the highest *average* ratings belonging to a given focus position in a range. The table also indicates what syntactic functions turned out to be less acceptable in a given position.

	Lowest and highest average rating	Less accepted syntactic functions
Immediately preverbal	4,37–4,86	–
Sentence-final	3,81–4,57	Adv _{TEMP} (3,81–4,03)
Sentence-initial	3,03–4,45	Adv _{TEMP} (3,74–3,88), Ins (3,32), O (3,03–3,43)

Table 2: *Lowest and highest average ratings of the test sentences/focus positions on a 5-point Likert scale*

Sentences that were given a score equivalent to or higher than 4 on average were considered as grammatical, while those with an average between 3 and 4 were regarded as degraded in grammaticality (but not ungrammatical). It is important to note that none of the test sentences was given an average score below 3, thus, none of them turned out to be completely ungrammatical.

The immediately preverbal focus position turned out to be grammatical independently of the syntactic function of the focused element, cf. (36)–(41). The sentence-final focus position resulted to be almost as acceptable as the immediately preverbal one, cf. (36)–(40), but (temporal) adverbials were slightly less accepted sentence-finally (41). The sentence-initial position turned out to be grammatical with subject (36) and with dative foci (39), and somewhat degraded in acceptability with temporal adverbial (41), instrumental-comitative (40) and direct object foci (37)–(38), especially with non-specific, unmarked direct objects (38).

- (36) Subject focus
 (KAT^{PA}) *tuž-ges no čeber kart'ina-jež* (KAT^{PA}) *daša-ž* (KAT^{PA}).
 Kate very-CMPR PTCL nice picture-ACC K. make-PST.3SG K.
 'It was Kate who made the nicest picture.'

- (37) Object focus (morphologically marked object)
Context: ‘Whom did Peter beat?’
(?ART’OM-EZ) *Petyr* (ART’OM-EZ) *žyg-i-ž* (ART’OM-EZ).
Artjom-ACC Peter Artjom-ACC beat-PST-3SG A.-ACC
‘It was Artjom whom Peter beat.’
- (38) Object focus (unmarked object)
– *Lera perepeč* *ši-je*.
Lera perepechi[Udmurt national dish] eat-3SG
‘Lera is eating perepechi.’
– *Ug*, (??PEIŃAŃ) *Lera* (PEIŃAŃ) *šij-e* (PEIŃAŃ).
NEG.3SG pelmeni Lera pelmeni eat-3SG pelmeni
‘No, Lera is eating PELMENI.’ / ‘No, it is pelmeni that Lera is eating.’
- (39) Focus = NP in the dative case
(VIKTORIJA PUŠINA-LY) *žuri* (VIKTORIJA PUŠINA-LY) *tuž-ges* *no*
Victoria Pushina-DAT jury V.P.-DAT very-CMPR PTCL
tros ball šot-i-ž (VIKTORIJA PUŠINA-LY).
many score give-PST-3SG V.P.-DAT
Intended meaning: ‘The jury gave the highest score TO VICTORIA PUSHINA.’
- (40) Focus = NP in the instrumental-comitative case
– *Vadim Vera-jen=a ekt-i-ž?*
Vadim Vera-INS=Q dance-PST-3SG
‘Did Vadim dance with Vera?’
– *Öž*, (EUBA-JEN) *Vadim* (EUBA-JEN) *ekt-i-ž* (EUBA-JEN).
NEG.PST.3 Ljuba-INS Vadim L.-INS dance-PST-3SG L.-INS
‘No, Vadim danced WITH LJUBA.’ / ‘No, it was Ljuba whom Vadim danced with.’
- (41) Temporal adverbial focus
– *Ku pešataj-ed-ly žingyrt-o-d?*
when grandfather-2SG-DAT telephone-FUT-2SG
‘When are you going to telephone your grandfather?’
– (ČUKAŽE) *pešataj-e-ly* (ČUKAŽE) *žingyrt-o* (ČUKAŽE).
tomorrow grandfather-1SG-DAT tomorrow telephone-FUT.1SG tomorrow
‘I’m going to telephone my grandfather TOMORROW.’ / ‘It is tomorrow that I’m going to telephone my grandfather.’

In what follows, I will concentrate on the placement of direct object foci in relation to their morphological marking and lexical subcategory (proper noun/personal pronoun).

4.1.2 Direct object foci: overall results of Questionnaire 1

Figure 1 illustrates the overall results of Questionnaire 1. For each questionnaire item the percentage of speakers who accepted a given permutation of S, Adv, O_{FOC} and V as a grammatical and congruent answer to the related *wh*-question was calculated. Then, the results received for all questionnaire items were aggregated and the average percentage of speakers accepting a given word order (independently of the tested factors) was calculated.

On the whole, word orders and focus positions which were accepted by at least 50% of the respondents were considered as grammatical, while those that were chosen by less than 50% but at least 30% of the respondents, as marginally acceptable.

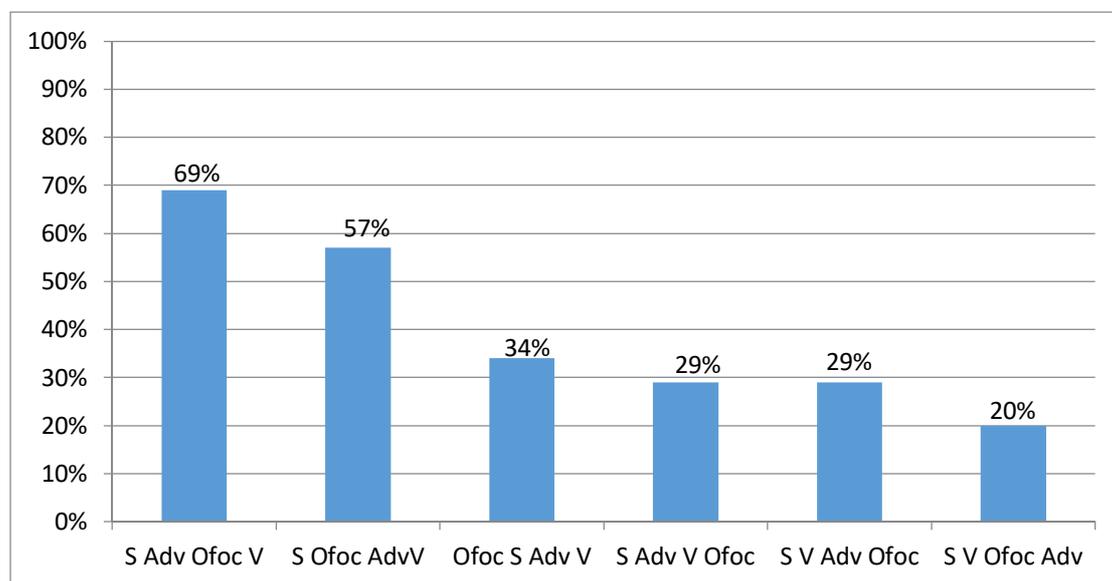


Figure 1: Average percentages of speakers accepting the tested word orders in Questionnaire 1 (all items included)¹⁵

Each tested word order variant was considered as a grammatical answer by at least one respondent to at least one question, but, as expected, the individual word orders did not turn out to be equally acceptable. Overall, the following tendencies were observed:

- The most accepted focus position resulted to be the immediately preverbal one (SAdvO_{FOC}V order).
- Preverbal foci were given more favourable judgements than postverbal ones.
- Besides the immediately preverbal focus position, the “pre-adverbial” one (SO_{FOC}AdvV order) also turned out to be grammatical.
- Sentence-initial foci preceding the subject and the locative adverbial (O_{FOC}SAdvV order) resulted to be marginally acceptable.
- Sentence-final foci (SVAdvO_{FOC} and SAdvVO_{FOC} orders) were judged ungrammatical. (This contradicts the results of Questionnaire 3 (cf. Section 4.1.1), see Section 4.1.5 for a more detailed discussion of this problem.)
- Postverbal but not sentence-final foci (SVO_{FOC}Adv order) also resulted to be ungrammatical.

However, the grammaticality of certain focus positions varies to some extent in relation to the morphosyntactic properties of the focused object. This will be discussed in the following subsections.

¹⁵ 100% refers to the total number of questionnaire items (8) multiplied by the number of respondents (12) = 96.

4.1.3 *Direct object foci: morphological marking*

Four questionnaire items in Questionnaire 1 aimed at examining whether morphological marking plays a role in the placement of object foci. As anticipated in Section 4.1.1, Udmurt has differential object marking: direct objects can either be morphologically unmarked (formally identical to the nominative) (42), or case-marked (accusative) (43)–(44). Object marking is related to definiteness and specificity: non-specific indefinite objects are morphologically unmarked (42), whereas specific indefinites (43) and definites (44) are marked with the accusative case suffix (É. Kiss & Tánčzos 2018: 738–739, 752–753).

- (42) *Mon kníga lydz'-i.*
 1SG book read-PST.1SG
 'I read a book.' (É. Kiss & Tánčzos 2018: 738)
- (43) *Mon odíg puny-jez utća-ško.*
 1SG one dog-ACC search-PRS.1SG
 'I am searching for a (specific) dog.' (É. Kiss & Tánčzos 2018: 753)
- (44) *Mon Saša-jez magažin-ys adž'-i.*
 1SG Sasha-ACC grocery-ELA see-PST.1SG
 'I saw Sasha at the grocery.' (É. Kiss & Tánčzos 2018: 752)

Vilkuna (1998: 188) observes a relationship between the position and the morphological marking of direct objects: in the corpus she studied (compiled mainly of texts of 20th century prose (1998: 227)), the vast majority (88%) of unmarked objects immediately preceded the verb, while only less than half (42,8%) of accusative objects did so. There thus seems to be a tendency for unmarked objects to immediately precede the verb. This tendency has sometimes been described in the literature as a sort of incorporation of the object into the verb, as the unmarked object in such cases often forms a prosodic and morphosyntactic unit with the verb (Alatyrev et al. 1970: 169). Thus, the percentage of preverbal but not verb-adjacent objects was much higher in Vilkuna's corpus among accusative objects (42,1%) than among nominative ones (8,6%), and postverbal positioning was also more typical of marked objects than of unmarked ones (15,1% vs. 3,4%).

However, in contemporary blog texts, as Asztalos (2018)'s investigations indicate, the difference in the ability of unmarked and marked direct objects to occur postverbally seems to attenuate. This is accompanied by a strong increase of the proportion of postverbal direct objects, be they marked or unmarked: in Asztalos (2018)'s corpus, 35,5% of accusative-marked and 33% of unmarked object NPs appeared postverbally (2018: 78). (The calculations in both Vilkuna's (1998) and Asztalos's (2018) paper are made independently of the discourse function of the objects, that is, the counts of the authors are not limited to objects with focus function only.)

It may thus be of interest to see whether morphologically marked and unmarked focused objects show different tendencies with regard to their placement in the sentence.

Questionnaire 1 contained four related questionnaire items: two with a morphologically unmarked common noun object, and two with a marked common noun object. Figure 2 illustrates the average results:

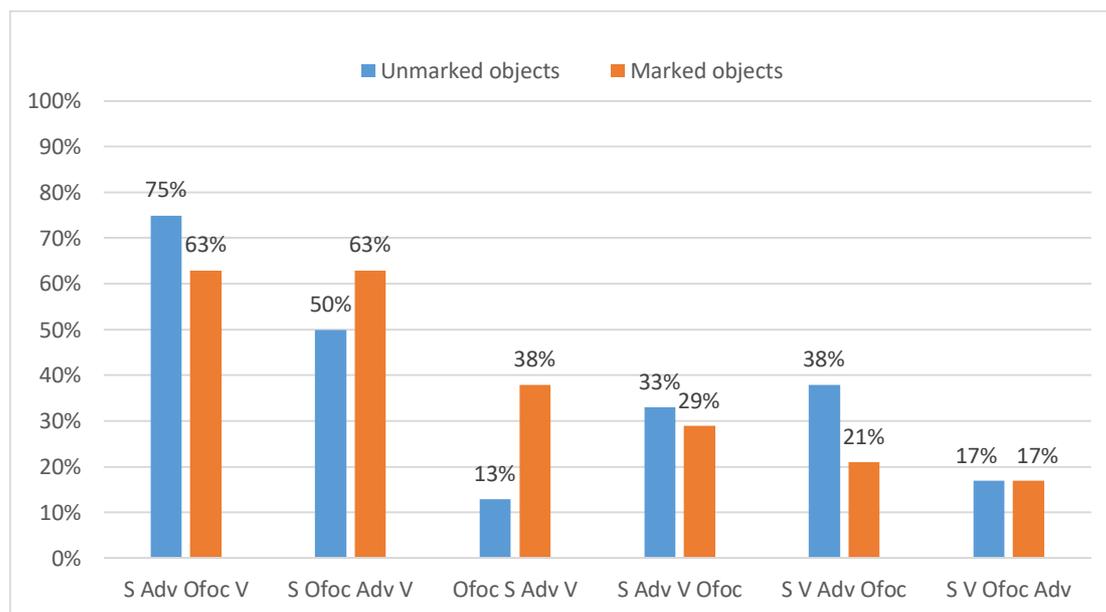


Figure 2: Percentages of speakers accepting the tested word orders with morphologically unmarked and marked focused objects (Questionnaire 1)¹⁶

Immediately preverbal focusing turned out to be grammatical with both object types (45)–(46), though it gave slightly better results with unmarked objects (45) than with marked ones (46).

(45) *Magazsin-yś Lera KUREG baśt-i-ż.*¹⁷
 grocery-ELA Lera chicken buy-PST-3SG
 ‘It is chicken that Lera bought at the grocery.’

(46) *Prazdńik-e Lera TA KUREG-EZ vaj-i-ż.*¹⁸
 celebration-ILL Valerie this chicken-ACC bring-PST-3SG
 ‘It is this chicken that Lera brought to the party.’

¹⁶ 100% refers to the number of related questionnaire items (2) multiplied by the number of respondents (12) = 24.

¹⁷ The focus-eliciting contexts for all sentences meaning ‘It is chicken that Lera bought at the grocery’ are given in (19) and (21).

¹⁸ The focus-eliciting contexts for all sentences meaning ‘It was this chicken that Lera brought to the party’ are given in (i) and (ii):

(i) *Ma-je Lera prazdńik-e vaj-i-ż?*
 what-ACC Lera celebration-ILL bring-PST-3SG
 ‘What did Lera bring to the party?’

(ii) *Ma-je Lera prazdńik-e vaj-i-ż; ta kureg-eż=a jake so-że?*
 what-ACC Lera celebration-ILL bring-PST-3SG this chicken-ACC=Q or that-DET.ACC
 ‘What did Lera bring to the party: this chicken or that one?’

Pre-adverbial focusing (SO_{FOC}AdvV) turned out to be grammatical with both object types, but it turned out to be more acceptable with objects in the accusative (47), while with objects in the nominative (48) it just reached the margin of grammaticality.

- (47) *Lera* TA KUREG-EZ *praždník-e* *vaj-i-ž*.
 Lera this chicken-ACC celebration-ILL bring-PST-3SG
 ‘It is this chicken that Lera brought to the party.’
- (48) *Lera* KUREG *magažin-ys* *bašt-i-ž*.
 Lera chicken grocery-ELA buy-PST-3SG
 ‘It is chicken that Lera bought at the grocery.’

Sentence-initial focusing was marginally accepted with marked objects (49), while it turned out to be ungrammatical with unmarked ones (50) (note that unmarked, non-specific objects received less favourable judgements than marked ones in sentence-initial position in Questionnaire 3 as well, see Section 4.1.1):

- (49) ?TA KUREG-EZ *Lera* *praždník-e* *vaj-i-ž*.
 this chicken-ACC Lera celebration-ILL bring-PST-3SG
 ‘It is this chicken that Lera brought to the party.’
- (50) *KUREG *Lera* *magažin-ys* *bašt-i-ž*.
 chicken Lera grocery-ELA buy-PST-3SG
 Intended meaning: ‘It is chicken that Lera bought at the grocery.’

The above tendencies are in line with Vilkuna’s results (1998: 185–189) that non-verb-adjacent positions in the preverbal field are preferred in Udmurt with morphologically marked objects, and unmarked objects have a tendency to occur in the immediately preverbal position. Besides the above mentioned point that unmarked objects sometimes show incorporated object-like properties (Alatyrev et al. 1970: 169), a further reason for the dispreference for OS(Adv)V sentences with unmarked objects may lie in processing difficulties related to case-ambiguity. Studies on German (Gorrell 2000; Hemforth & Konieczny 2000; Schlesewsky & Bornkessel 2004) point to a processing difficulty of OS structures with case-ambiguous objects, and Levshina’s (2019) study reveals that cross-linguistically, formally overlapping subjects and objects tend to have rigid word order relative to each other. In the case of Udmurt, this may imply a difficulty to obtain an OSV reading for sentences which contain two morphologically unmarked nouns, given that the basic word order is SOV.¹⁹

Interestingly, sentence-final foci resulted to be marginally acceptable with objects in the nominative, while ungrammatical with objects in the accusative (51).

- (51) a. ?*Lera* *magažin-ys* *bašt-i-ž* KUREG / *TA KUREG-EZ.
 Lera grocery-ELA buy-PST-3SG chicken / this chicken-ACC

¹⁹ However, as a reviewer points out, the animacy difference between the two morphologically unmarked nouns is sharp enough in (50) to ease the identification of the syntactic functions of the two nouns.

- b. ?Lera *bašt-i-ž* *magažin-ys* KUREG / *TA KUREG-EZ.
 Lera buy-PST-3SG grocery-ELA chicken / this chicken-ACC
 'It is chicken/*this chicken that Lera bought at the grocery.'

Postverbal but not sentence-final focusing resulted to be ungrammatical with both object types:

- (52) *Lera *bašt-i-ž* KUREG *magažin-ys*.
 Lera buy-PST-3SG chicken grocery-ELA
 'It is chicken that Lera bought at the grocery.'
- (53) *Lera *vaj-i-ž* TA KUREG-EZ *praždnik-e*.
 Lera bring-PST-3SG this chicken-ACC celebration-ILL
 'It is this chicken that Lera brought to the party.'

4.1.4 Direct object foci: lexical subcategory (proper nouns vs. personal pronouns)

In Questionnaire 1, four items (two with a proper noun direct object and two with a personal pronoun direct object) were concerned with the question whether proper noun and pronominal object foci tend to be placed into different positions.²⁰ The results are summarized in Figure 3.

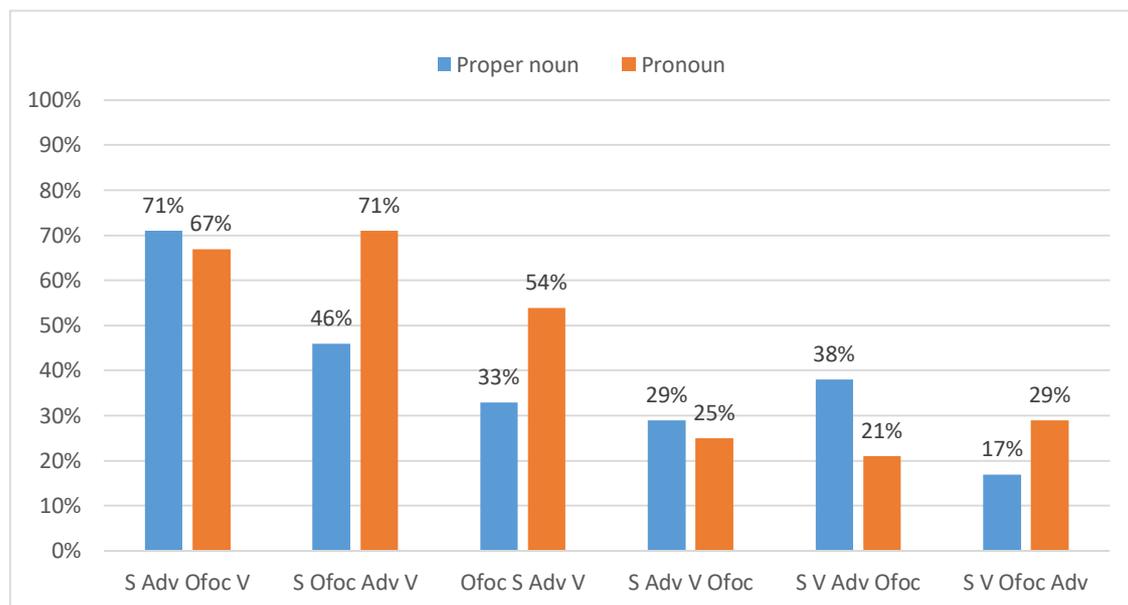


Figure 3: Percentages of speakers accepting the tested word orders with proper noun and pronominal focused objects (Questionnaire 1)²¹

²⁰ Both object types are morphologically marked: proper noun objects as specific and definite nouns are marked by the accusative case suffix by rule, whereas personal pronouns always have different forms in the subject and in the object function (nominative vs. accusative).

²¹ 100% refers to the number of related questionnaire items (2) multiplied by the number of respondents (12) = 24.

Immediately preverbal foci were considered as grammatical independently of the lexical subcategory of the object:

- (54) *Žeńa bazar-ys* AEONA-JEZ / TON-E *adž'-i-ž.*²²
 Zhenja market-ELA Aljona-ACC / 2SG-ACC see-PST-3SG
 'It was Aljona/you whom Zhenja saw at the market.'

Pre-verbal but not verb-adjacent focus positions (SO_{FOC}AdvV and O_{FOC}SAdvV orders, cf. (55)–(56)) turned out to be grammatical with personal pronoun objects, and marginally acceptable with proper nouns. More precisely, SO_{FOC}AdvV order was highly acceptable with personal pronouns, and sentence-initial object focusing resulted to be clearly grammatical, among all examined object types (nominative/accusative, proper noun/personal pronoun), with personal pronouns only. This is, in fact, also in line with Vilkuna's results: personal pronoun objects (along with demonstrative pronoun objects) turned out to be the most "movable" object type in her corpus as well, which means that pronominal objects occurred more frequently in preverbal but not verb-adjacent and in postverbal positions than other object types (1998: 188).

- (55) (TON-E) *Žeńa* (TON-E) *bazar-ys* *adž'-i-ž.*
 2SG-ACC Zhenja 2SG-ACC market-ELA see-PST-3SG
 'It was you whom Zhenja saw at the market.'

- (56) (?AEONA-JEZ) *Žeńa* (AEONA-JEZ) *bazar-ys* *adž'-i-ž.*
 Aljona-ACC Zhenja A.-ACC market-ELA see-PST-3SG
 'It was Aljona whom Zhenja saw at the market.'

The accessibility of preverbal but not verb-adjacent focus positions for personal pronoun objects may be related to the high degree of definiteness of personal pronouns. Personal pronouns are located on top of the so-called *definiteness scale* (cf. Aissen 2003), cf.

²² The focus-eliciting questions of all sentences meaning 'It was Aljona whom Zhenja saw at the market' are given in (i) and (ii), while those of the sentences meaning 'It was you whom Zhenja saw at the market', in (i) and (iii).

(i) *Kin-e Žeńa bazar-ys adž'-i-ž?*
 who-ACC Zhenja market-ELA see-PST-3SG
 'Whom did Zhenja see at the market?'

(ii) *Kin-e Žeńa bazar-ys adž'-i-ž, Aljona-jež jake Aloša-jež?*
 who-ACC Zhenja market-ELA see-PST-3SG Aljona-ACC or Aljoshka-ACC
 'Whom did Zhenja see at the market, Aljona or Aljoshka?'

(iii) *Kin-e Žeńa bazar-ys adž'-i-ž, mon-e=a jake Aloša-jež?*
 who-ACC Zhenja market-ELA see-PST-3SG me-ACC=Q or Aljoshka-ACC
 'Whom did Zhenja see at the market, me or Aljoshka?'

(57). The more to the left a grammatical entity is placed on the scale, the more it counts as definite:

- (57) *Definiteness scale* (Aissen 2003)
 Personal pronoun > Proper name > Definite NP > Indefinite specific NP >
 Non-specific NP

Cross-linguistically, categories located at the top of the hierarchy can behave differently from those at the bottom of the scale. This may imply for Udmurt, in this case, that personal pronouns have a freer distribution (at least in the preverbal field) than categories lower on the hierarchy: thus, even when they have a special discourse role (i.e., that of focus), they can occupy positions which are less accessible for categories lower on the scale. As we have seen in Section 4.1.3, preverbal but not verb-adjacent focus positions are more available for accusative objects (which are definite) than for morphologically unmarked objects (which are indefinite and non-specific). Overall, it seems that personal pronoun objects have the most flexible distribution, and morphologically unmarked, non-specific objects the least flexible distribution in the preverbal field in Udmurt, while accusative-marked definite NP objects are located between the two extremities, which fits what one could expect on the basis of the definiteness scale.²³

Postverbal object foci (independently of whether they were proper nouns or personal pronouns) were in most cases accepted only by a small fraction of speakers, the average judgment not reaching the margin of grammaticality. The only exception was the SVAdvO_{FOC} order, which resulted to be marginally acceptable with proper noun objects.

4.1.5 *Interim summary*

Let us sum up what has been presented so far in this section.

The immediately preverbal focus position turned out to be grammatical independently of the syntactic function of the focused element, and, in the case of direct object foci, independently of their morphological marking and lexical subcategory.

The sentence-initial position, according to the results of Questionnaire 3, is more readily available for subject and dative foci than for direct object foci.

Preverbal but not verb-adjacent positions (i.e., the sentence-initial one and the one with an adverbial standing in between the focused object and the verb) seem to be sensitive to the morphological marking and to the lexical subcategory of the object. While morphologically unmarked object foci cannot occur sentence-initially, morphologically marked focused object nouns turned out to be marginally acceptable, and personal pronoun focused objects resulted to be grammatical in the sentence-initial position. The “pre-adverbial” position was more easily available for morphologically marked objects than for unmarked ones, and more easily available for personal pronouns than for proper nouns. The fact that the sentence-initial position is not available for unmarked direct objects may be explained, at least partly, by processing reasons: given the SOV character of Udmurt, obtaining an OSV reading for sentences that display two morphologically unmarked noun phrases in preverbal position may result in processing difficulties (similarly to German, see Gorrell 2000; Hemforth & Konieczny 2000; Schlesewsky & Bornkessel 2004). On the

²³ Nevertheless, the question remains why accusative-marked proper nouns were less accepted in preverbal but not verb-adjacent positions than accusative-marked, definite common nouns (cf. Figure 2 and 3).

other hand, the different degree of definiteness of the tested object types may also play a role. Personal pronouns, which are highly definite, seem to have the most flexible distribution, whereas unmarked objects, which are non-specific and sometimes behave similarly to incorporated objects (Alatyrev et al. 1970: 169), the least flexible distribution, at least in the preverbal field.

Postverbal but not sentence-final object foci were acceptable only for a small part of the speakers, thus, overall, they resulted to be ungrammatical in Questionnaire 1.

Sentence-final placement of foci also turned out to be on the whole ungrammatical in Questionnaire 1, but marginally acceptable with unmarked common nouns and with personal pronouns. However, in Questionnaire 3, sentence-final foci did turn out to be grammatical; what is more, they were evaluated as being almost as good as immediately preverbal foci.

The low acceptability of sentence-final foci in Questionnaire 1 is presumably due to normative reasons. In fact, all respondents of Questionnaire 1 were either students or employees of the Faculty of Udmurt Philology of the Udmurt State University. In Udmurt prescriptive linguistics, there exists a general normative restraint according to which non-verb-final sentences are to be avoided, and this may have had a considerable impact on the choices of the respondents of Questionnaire 1 because of respondents' education in Udmurt philology. In contrast with this, Questionnaire 3 was distributed via the social networking sites *Facebook* and *Vkontakte*, thus, the respondents were drawn from a more heterogeneous group.

4.2 Focus interpretation: contrastivity and exhaustivity

As mentioned in Section 3, in Questionnaire 1, all sentences were tested both in non-contrastive contexts (as answers to *wh*-questions), and in contrastive contexts (as answers to alternative *wh*-questions). None of the tested focus positions resulted to be obligatorily contrastive: no focus position turned out to be grammatical with contrastive foci and at the same time ungrammatical with non-contrastive foci. This is illustrated in Figure 4.

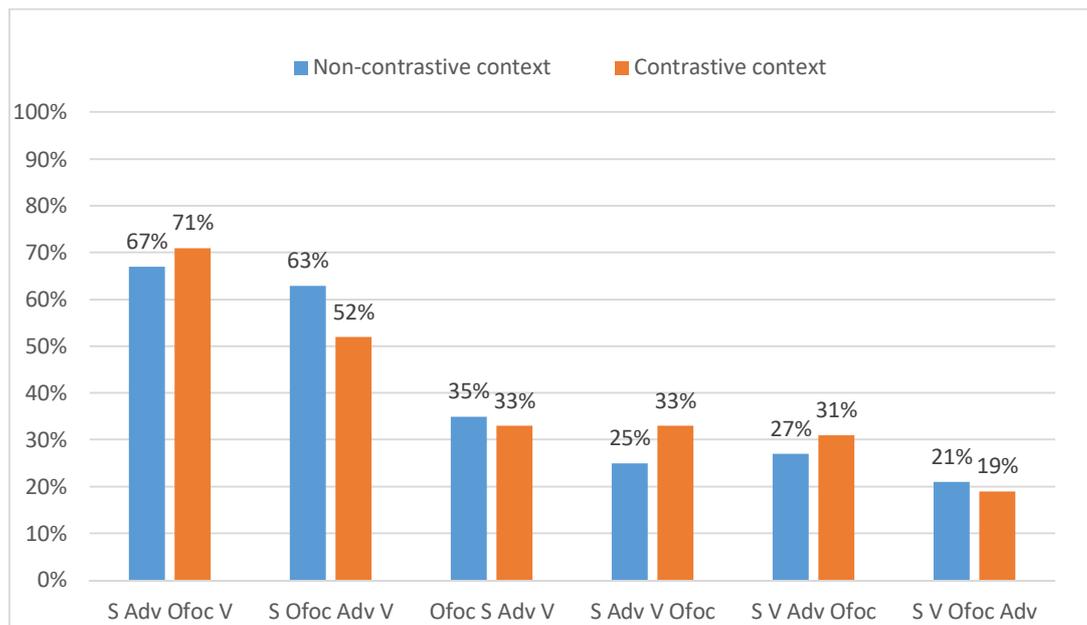


Figure 4: Percentages of speakers accepting the tested word orders in non-contrastive and contrastive contexts (Questionnaire 1)²⁴

Thus, immediately preverbal foci and pre-adverbial foci resulted to be grammatical both in contrastive and non-contrastive contexts, see (57)–(58):

- (57) Context₁: ‘What did Lera buy at the grocery?’
 Context₂: ‘What did Lera buy at the grocery, chicken or duck?’
Magažin-yś Lera KUREG baśt-i-ž.
 grocery-ELA Lera chicken buy-PST-3SG
 ‘It is chicken that Lera bought at the grocery.’
- (58) Context₁: ‘What did Lera buy at the grocery?’
 Context₂: ‘What did Lera buy at the grocery, chicken or duck?’
Lera TA KUREG-EZ prazdnik-e vaj-i-ž.
 Lera this chicken-ACC celebration-ILL bring-PST-3SG
 ‘It is this chicken that Lera brought to the party.’

Sentence-initial foci were also judged similarly in the two different contexts. As presented in 4.1.4, sentence-initial object foci turned out to be grammatical with personal pronouns only, cf. (59), but here again, the fact whether the context was contrastive or not did not play a role:

²⁴ 100% refers to the number of related questionnaire items (4) multiplied by the number of respondents (12) = 48.

- (59) Context₁: ‘Whom did Zhenja see at the market?’
 Context₂: ‘Whom did Zhenja see at the market, me or Aliosha?’
 TON-E Žeńa bazar-yś adž-i-z:
 2SG-ACC Zhenja market-ELA see-PST-3SG
 ‘It was you whom Zhenja saw at the market.’

The acceptability of postverbal (including sentence-final) foci was below 50% independently of the contrastivity of the context.

The results of Questionnaire 2 also suggest that none of the tested focus positions is associated with an obligatorily contrastive reading. As mentioned in Section 3, contrastive focus was tested in Questionnaire 2 by means of corrections. As opposed to them, non-contrastive exhaustive foci were examined. The latter were tested by two means: exhaustivity was either meant to arise exclusively from the context, or it was also lexically marked by the particle *gine* ‘only’.

It has to be noted that, since in Questionnaire 1 sentence-initial and pre-adverbial object foci were judged more favourably with personal pronouns than with non-pronominal elements (cf. Section 4.1.4), SO_{FOC}AdvV and O_{FOC}SV orders in Questionnaire 2 were only tested with pronominal objects. (Moreover, the subject was also pronominal in these test sentences.)

Figure 5 shows the percentage of speakers who considered the tested word orders as grammatical:

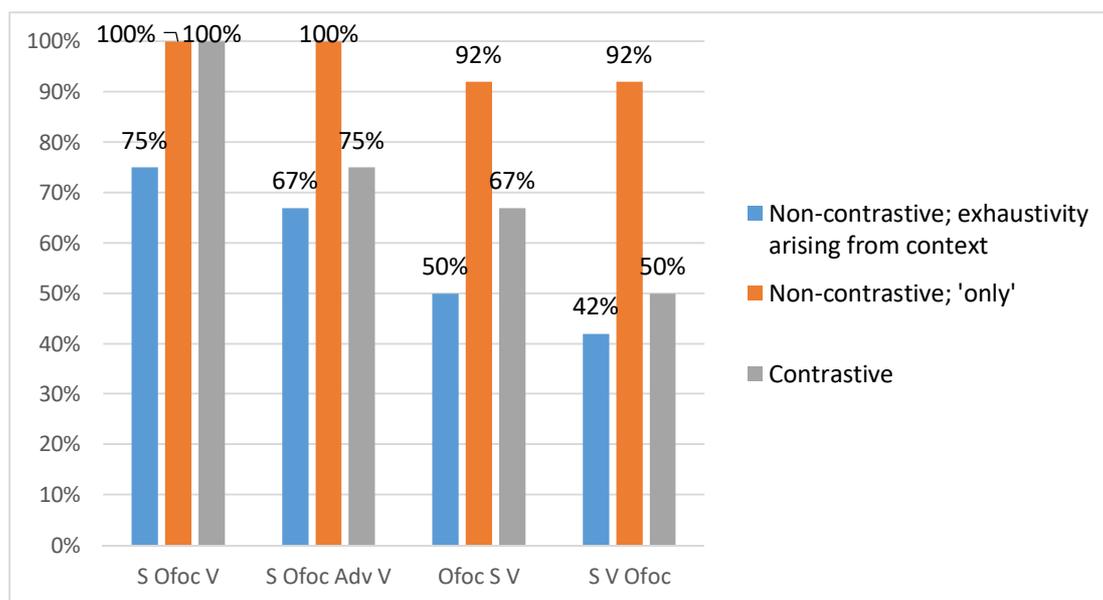


Figure 5: Percentages of speakers accepting the tested word orders in non-contrastive and contrastive contexts (Questionnaire 2)²⁵

The results indicate that contrastive foci can occur in all of the tested positions (immediately preverbal (60a), sentence-final (60a), sentence-initial (60b), pre-adverbial (61)), though, sentence-final contrastive foci barely reached the margin of grammaticality.

²⁵ 100% refers to the number of related questionnaire items (1) multiplied by the number of respondents (12) = 12.

- (60) Context: ‘Did Nadja choose Sasha?’
 a. $\ddot{O}\ddot{z}$, *so* (VOLOD’A-JEZ) *byrj-i-ž* (VOLOD’A-JEZ).
 NEG.PST.3 3SG Volodja-ACC choose-PST-3SG V.-ACC
 ‘No, it was Volodja whom she chose.’
 b. $\ddot{O}\ddot{z}$ TON-E *so byrjiž*.
 NEG.PST.3 2SG -ACC 3SG choose-PST-3SG
 ‘No, it was you whom she chose.’
- (61) Context: ‘Did Nastja choose Cyril among the boys?’
 $\ddot{O}\ddot{z}$ *so* MON-E *pi-os pöl-yś* *byrj-i-ž*.²⁶
 NEG.PST.3 3SG 1SG-ACC boy-PL among-ELA choose-PST-3SG
 ‘No, it was me whom she chose among the boys.’

Similarly to the results of Questionnaire 1, no focus position turned out to be clearly grammatical with contrastive foci and at the same time clearly ungrammatical with non-contrastive foci. Thus, none of the focus positions resulted to be obligatorily contrastive.

As for exhaustive foci, the results indicate that those marked with the particle *gine* ‘only’ can grammatically appear in all tested positions (immediately preverbal (62), pre-adverbial (63), sentence-initial (64), and sentence-final (65)), which confirms Vilkuina’s claim that phrases with *gine* are freely placed in the sentence (1998: 196). However, when exhaustivity was meant to arise solely from the context, all word orders were much less accepted than in the case of *gine*-marked foci (and also less accepted than with contrastive foci) – though they all resulted to be grammatical with the exception of SVO_{FOC}, which was somewhat below the margin of grammaticality. The lower acceptability of sentence-final foci is probably due to the same reason as in the case of Questionnaire 1 (see Section 4.1.5), i.e., the respondents of Questionnaire 2 were also students or teachers of the Faculty of Udmurt Philology of the Udmurt State University and thus, the normative restraint according to which they should avoid non-verb-final sentences may have had an impact on their choices.

The lower acceptability of all word orders in the case of lexically non-marked exhaustive foci, however, is likely to be due to the relative oddity (mentioned in Section 3) of the test dialogue itself.

- (62) – *D’ima* JULIJA-JEZ (*gine*) *jarat-e*.
 Dima Julia-ACC only love-3SG
 ‘It is Julia whom Dima (only) loves.’
 – *Ug*, *so Annajež no jarat-e*.
 NEG.3SG 3SG Anne-ACC also love-3SG
 ‘No, he also loves Anne.’
- (63) – *Oleg* TON-E (*gine*) *klub-yś adž-i-ž*.
 Oleg 2SG-ACC only disco-ELA see-PST-3SG
 ‘It was (only) you whom Oleg saw at the disco.’

²⁶ The object occupied the same positions in the first and second sentences of the dialogues. If a respondent left the position of the object unchanged in the *test sentence* and changed it only in the *context sentence* of the dialogue, the related word order/focus position was regarded as accepted by that speaker.

- $\ddot{O}\ddot{z}$ *so* *ton-e* *no* *ot-yś* *adž-i-ž*.
 NEG.PST.3 3SG 2SG-ACC also there-ELA see-PST-3SG
 ‘No, he also saw you there.’
- (64) – MON-E (*gine*) *so* *jarat-e*.
 2SG-ACC only 3SG love-3SG
 ‘It is (only) me whom (s)he loves.’
- *Ug*, *mon-e* *no* *so* *jarat-e*.
 NEG.3SG 1SG-ACC also 3SG love-3SG
 ‘No, (s)he also loves me.’
- (65) – *Ljuba* *jarat-e* ARTUR-EZ (*gine*).
 Ljuba love-3SG Arthur-ACC only
 ‘It is (only) Arthur whom Ljuba loves.’
- *Ug*, *so* *jarat-e* *Art’ome-ž* *no*.
 NEG.3SG 3SG love-3SG Artjom-ACC also
 ‘No, she also loves Artjom.’

As mentioned in Section 3, Questionnaire 3 concentrated on immediately preverbal, sentence-initial and sentence-final foci. Table 3 illustrates that the focus positions under discussion were given similar scores on average in non-contrastive and contrastive contexts, which again confirms the claim that their grammaticality does not depend on contrastivity, cf. (66)–(67), and that none of the positions is associated with an obligatorily contrastive reading.

	Non-contrastive	Contrastive
Immediately preverbal	4,64	4,79
Sentence-final	4,36	4,35
Sentence-initial	3,74	3,47

Table 3: *Acceptability of focus positions in non-contrastive and contrastive contexts (average ratings on a 5-point Likert scale)*

- (66) Context: ‘Who telephoned yesterday?’
 (?L’UDMILA) *tolon* (L’UDMILA) *žingyrt-i-ž* (L’UDMILA).
 Ludmila yesterday L. telephone-PST-3SG L.
 ‘It is Ludmila who telephoned yesterday.’
- (67) Context: ‘Today Anne will sing for us.’
 $U\ddot{z}$ (?D’IANA) *tunne* (D’IANA) *mil’emly* *kyrž’a-lo-ž* (D’IANA).
 NEG.FUT.3SG Diana today D. 1PL.DAT sing-FUT-3SG D.
 ‘No, it is Diana who will sing for us today.’

The results of the test with numerical modifiers of Questionnaire 3 (see Section 3) suggest that none of the examined focus positions is necessarily exhaustive, either: independently of the position of the numerically modified phrase, around 80% of the

respondents preferred the ‘at least *n*’ interpretation over the ‘exactly *n*’ one for the sentences in (68)–(70).²⁷

- (68) *Kin* *ekszamen-yn* *91* *ball* *luka-z*, *kużym* *bašt-o-z*.
 who exam-INE 91 score gather-PST.3SG present receive-FUT-3SG
 ‘Who gets 91 points at the exam is going to receive a present.’
- (69) *Ađami-os-ly*, *kud-jos-yz* *3* *kńiga* *magażin-yśty-my* *bašt-o*, *duntek*
 people-PL-DAT which-PL-DET 3 book shop-ELA-1PL buy-3PL free
disk *śot-o-m*.
 disc give-FUT-1PL
 ‘To those people who buy 3 books in our shop, we will give a free disk.’
- (70) *Kin-len* *vań* *kyk* *nyłpi-jez*, *so-ly* *kun-my* *kpart’ira* *śot-e*.
 who-GEN be two child-3SG 3SG-DAT state-1PL flat give-3SG
 ‘To those who have two children, our state will give a flat.’

Overall, the results of Questionnaire 2 and 3 suggest that exhaustive interpretation is available in each tested focus position, but none of these positions is *obligatorily* exhaustive.

4.3 Variation across speakers

The results of Questionnaire 1 and 3 were evaluated speaker-internally, as well. In order to see how flexible speakers are with regard to object focus placement, in Questionnaire 1, the average number of speakers’ word order choices per item was calculated: the number of total word order choices was counted per speaker (the maximal number of possible choices, as presented in Section 3, was six for each questionnaire item), then the amount received was divided by the number of questionnaire items (= 8). Table 4 summarizes the average numbers, as well as the maximal and minimal numbers of word orders accepted by the speakers. To put it another way, the table illustrates speakers’ degree of flexibility with regard to object focus placement:

²⁷ However, as noted in Section 3, extralinguistic factors such as a general knowledge about the world may also have had an impact on respondents’ answers.

Speaker	Average nr. of w.o. choices (max. value = 6)	Range of w.o. choices
Speaker 1	1	1–1
Speaker 2	1	1–1
Speaker 3	1	1–1
Speaker 4	1,8	1–3
Speaker 5	1,8	1–3
Speaker 6	1,9	1–3
Speaker 7	2,1	2–3
Speaker 8	2,3	2–3
Speaker 9	3	2–4
Speaker 10	3,3	3–4
Speaker 11	3,8	2–6
Speaker 12	5,9	5–6

Table 4: *Average number and range of speakers' word order choices per item in Questionnaire 1*
(Max. value = 6)

As Table 4 illustrates, speakers' flexibility varies considerably. 25% of respondents (Speaker 1, 2, and 3) considered as grammatical only one (though, not in every case the same) word order variant throughout the whole questionnaire. More than half of the respondents (Speaker 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10) marked most frequently 2 or 3 word order variants as correct. Finally, some respondents considered all variants in certain items as grammatical (Speaker 11), or throughout almost the whole questionnaire (Speaker 12).

Speakers seem to vary greatly in relation to their focus position preferences, as well. In the case of Questionnaire 1, it was counted, speaker by speaker, how many times they accepted a given word order variant throughout the whole questionnaire. SAdvVO_{FOC} and SVAdvO_{FOC} orders were both counted as instances of sentence-final foci, and therefore, no matter whether a respondent marked only one or both of them as grammatical in a questionnaire item, they were only counted once. Afterwards, the percentages in which each focus position was chosen were calculated speaker by speaker. The results are presented in Figure 6.

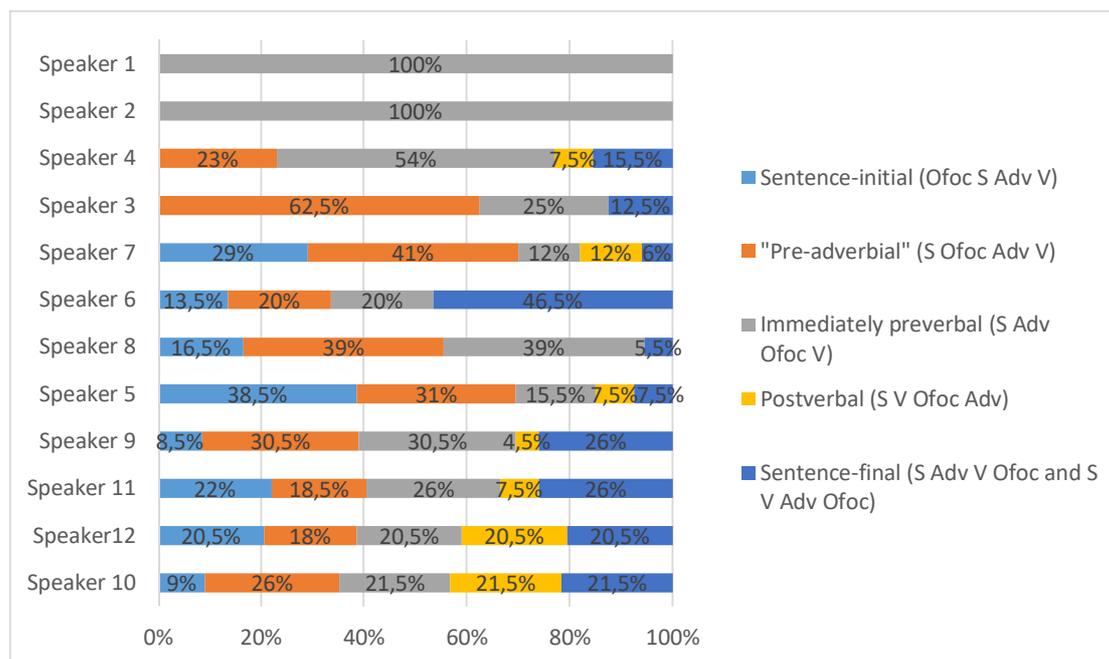


Figure 6: *Speakers' overall focus position choices in Questionnaire 1*²⁸

Two respondents (Speaker 1 and Speaker 2) opted consistently, and one (Speaker 4) in more than 50% of the cases for the immediately preverbal focus position. Speaker 3 and Speaker 7 chose most frequently the “pre-adverbial” focus position, while Speaker 6 opted most frequently for sentence-final foci. Speaker 8 had an equal preference for pre-adverbial and immediately preverbal foci, and Speaker 5, a roughly equal preference for the sentence-initial and the pre-adverbial focus position. Speaker 9 chose sentence-final foci almost as frequently as pre-adverbial or immediately preverbal ones. The rest of the respondents did not show any obvious preference for any of the focus positions, or considered all options to be equally or almost equally good. No speaker had a preference for postverbal but not sentence-final foci.

In the case of Questionnaire 3, speaker-internal evaluation of the results consisted in checking, speaker by speaker, how they evaluated, throughout the whole questionnaire, the three tested focus positions compared to each other. As Table 5 illustrates, 38% of the respondents gave consistently better judgements to the immediately preverbal focus position than to the other options. Almost half (48%) of the respondents considered the sentence-final position to be as good, or almost as good, as the immediately preverbal one. Thus, sentence-final foci were given much more favourable judgements in Questionnaire 3 than in Questionnaire 2. However, only a negligible proportion (3%) of speakers preferred the sentence-final position over all other options. A small portion (11%) of respondents judged all focus positions to be equally good. Finally, no speaker had a preference for sentence-initial foci.

²⁸ 100% refers to the total number of questionnaire items in Questionnaire 1 (8) multiplied by the number of possible answer sentences per item (6) = 48.

Preferred position(s)	% of respondents
Immediately preverbal	38%
Immediately preverbal + sentence-final	48%
Sentence-final	3%
No preference (all options equally good)	11%

Table 5: *Speakers' focus position preference in Questionnaire 3*

4.4 Typological implications and the influence of Russian

Let us now consider the Udmurt data from a typological perspective. As presented in 2.2, Czypionka (2007), in a typological study carried out on 112 languages, shows that the most common syntactic focus positions in SOV languages are the immediately preverbal one and the sentence-initial one. On the other hand, postverbal focusing resulted to be really rare in SOV languages, and none of the SOV languages examined in her study had sentence-final focusing as its main focusing strategy (Czypionka 2007: 441–443). As for SVO languages, they rarely showed a preference for immediately preverbal focusing, while postverbal and sentence-final focusing was more common in them than in SOV languages. Interestingly, the main focusing strategy in SVO languages resulted to be the sentence-initial one, which was slightly more frequent in SVO than in SOV languages.

The fact that the immediately preverbal position resulted to be the most commonly accepted focus position in Udmurt corresponds to what one may expect on the basis of the traditional classification of Udmurt as an SOV language. However, according to Questionnaire 3, the sentence-final focus position is almost as acceptable in contemporary Udmurt as the immediately preverbal one (see also Tánčzos 2010). As sentence-final focusing is more typical of SVO than of SOV languages, this finding may further confirm the claim that contemporary Udmurt is undergoing an SOV-to-SVO change (cf. Tánčzos 2013; Asztalos 2016, 2018; Asztalos et al. 2017). Since information foci in Russian are sentence-final, and Udmurt is subject to strong Russian influence (see Section 2.5), there is also good reason to attribute the development of the sentence-final focus position in Udmurt to the influence of Russian (see also Tánčzos 2010).

Sentence-initial (and, more generally, preverbal but not verb-adjacent) appearance of foci seems to be subject to restrictions in Udmurt, and understanding the exact conditions of sentence-initial focusing needs further investigation (e.g, it is a possibility that sentence-initial subject foci in Udmurt are in fact instances of *in situ* focusing). Given the fact that sentence-initial foci are approximately as common in SOV as in SVO languages, one could argue that the possibility of sentence-initial focusing does not necessarily have to be interpreted as a phenomenon induced by the influence of Russian: it could also arise from the SOV nature of Udmurt. However, speaker-internal evaluation of the results suggests that this is not necessarily the case. If the possibility of sentence-initial focusing were stemming from the SOV character of Udmurt, one would expect respondents with a preference for immediately preverbal focusing to have judged sentence-initial foci more favourably than sentence-final ones. As Figure 6 in Section 4.3 illustrates, this was not a typical pattern in Questionnaire 1. As for Questionnaire 3, the respondents either had a preference for the immediately preverbal position, or a roughly equal preference for the immediately preverbal and the sentence-final one, but no speaker showed a preference for the immediately preverbal and the sentence-initial positions. Even the respondents with a clear preference for immediately preverbal foci gave consistently better judgements for sentence-final foci than for sentence-initial ones. All in all, there do not seem to be strong

reasons to assume that the possibility of sentence-initial focusing originates from the SOV grammar of Udmurt.

The question whether sentence-initial focusing is then induced by Russian influence could be addressed within the frame of the present study by comparing the interpretation of sentence-initial foci in the two languages. As presented in Section 4.2, none of the focus positions resulted to be obligatorily exhaustive or contrastive in Udmurt. In Russian, preverbal (including sentence-initial) foci have also been claimed not to be necessarily exhaustive, but there is no consensus in the literature whether they are obligatorily contrastive or not (see Section 2.5). However, as Dyakonova (2009) and Bailyn (2012) present examples with preverbal foci in non-contrastive contexts, a non-obligatorily contrastive analysis seems to be more plausible. In this latter case, the focus positions may not differ too much in terms of contrastivity and exhaustivity in the two languages, and the possibility of having Russian influence behind sentence-initial focusing cannot to be excluded.

5 Summary

While Tánczos (2010) identified an immediately preverbal and a sentence-final focus position in the Udmurt sentence structure, the investigations presented in this paper confirm the claims and sporadic observations made in the literature (cf. Vilkuna 1998; Timerxanova 2011; Asztalos 2012) that the possibilities of focus placement are not limited in Udmurt to the aforementioned two positions. While confirming the findings that the most acceptable focus position is the immediately preverbal one and that sentence-final placement of foci is also grammatical for a part of the speakers, the results of this paper indicate that focused items can also appear in certain preverbal but not verb-adjacent positions. Namely, they can precede a preverbal adverbial and/or the subject. The occurrence of foci in these positions is, however, subject to limitations. Sentence-initial focusing resulted to be mostly available for subjects, for dative complements and for personal pronoun direct objects. The pre-adverbial position proved to be accessible mainly for personal pronoun objects and, in a wider sense, for objects marked with the accusative case suffix. The more flexible distribution of personal pronoun objects and of morphologically marked objects (as compared to morphologically unmarked ones) is presumably related to the different degree of definiteness of the different object types, personal pronouns being at the top of the definiteness scale and non-specific (unmarked) objects at the bottom of it. In addition, the dispreference for $O_{\text{FOC}}SV$ order with morphologically unmarked objects may also arise from processing difficulties: given the SOV nature of Udmurt, obtaining an OSV reading for sentences that contain two noun phrases without overt case-marking may require an extra processing cost (cf. Gorrell 2000; Hemforth & Konieczny 2000; Schlesewsky & Bornkessel 2004), thus, the order of unmarked objects relative to the subject may tend to be rigid in Udmurt (cf. Levshina 2019).

From an interpretive perspective, none of the focus positions turned out to be obligatorily contrastive or necessarily exhaustive. Thus, the acceptability of the tested focus positions does not depend on the contrastivity or on the exhaustivity of the focused item. However, when exhaustivity is lexically marked with the particle *gine* ‘only’, all of the tested focus positions (immediately preverbal, pre-adverbial, sentence-initial, sentence-final) are accepted to a much higher degree than when exhaustivity has to be retrieved solely on the basis of the test context.

Speakers vary notably in relation to their focus position preference and flexibility with regard to focus placement. Certain respondents considered as grammatical only one focus position throughout the whole questionnaire, or (in Questionnaire 3) had a clear preference for a certain focus position: in most cases this was the immediately preverbal position, in some (more rare) cases the pre-adverbial or the sentence-final one. Other speakers allowed more or all of the given possibilities. In Questionnaire 3, sentence-final foci were considered as grammatical only by respondents who also judged immediately preverbal foci to be grammatical. Finally, there were also speakers with no clear preference for any of the tested focus positions.

The Udmurt data presented in this paper may also be interesting from a typological point of view. According to Czypionka (2007), immediately preverbal focusing is much more typical of SOV than of SVO languages, while sentence-final focusing occurs in the latter but is not typical of the former. Thus, the fact that besides the most common strategy – i.e., immediately preverbal focusing – sentence-final focusing is also available for a part of the speakers, is itself a further argument for the claim that contemporary Udmurt is undergoing an SOV-to-SVO change (cf. Tánčzos 2013; Asztalos 2016, 2018; Asztalos et al. 2017). Since Russian has a sentence-final information focus position (cf. Section 2.5), and Udmurt is subject to strong Russian influence, it is feasible that the development of the sentence-final focus position in Udmurt is induced by Russian influence (see also Tánčzos 2010; Asztalos et al. 2017; Asztalos 2018). However, interestingly, sentence-initial focusing, which is actually the main focusing strategy in SVO languages and is also common in SOV languages, did not result to be widely accepted in Udmurt. This is somewhat surprising also when taking into consideration that Russian (besides its sentence-final position for information foci) has a sentence-initial focus position, as well. In any case, the exact conditions of sentence-initial focusing need to be further studied.

This paper had mainly descriptive aims and was principally concerned with the linear positions and the interpretation of foci in those positions. Several questions regarding focus in Udmurt remain to be answered by future work. *In situ* focussing, for instance, was not examined in detail here, nor was the interaction of word order with prosody studied in focus marking. The question whether any of the linearly determined focus positions is to be explained in terms of a position in hierarchical constituent structure (in other words, whether Udmurt is discourse-configurational with regard to any of its linearly identified focus positions), as well as the task of offering a possible syntactic analysis of focus positioning have also been left for future research.

Appendix A

A questionnaire item eliciting non-contrastive focus in Questionnaire 1

7. юан: Мар Лера магазиньсь басьтїз?

↓ (курег)



1. *ответ:* Лера КУРЕГ магазиньсь басьтїз.
2. *ответ:* Лера магазиньсь басьтїз КУРЕГ.
3. *ответ:* Лера магазиньсь КУРЕГ басьтїз.
4. *ответ:* КУРЕГ Лера магазиньсь басьтїз.
5. *ответ:* Лера басьтїз магазиньсь КУРЕГ.
6. *ответ:* Лера басьтїз КУРЕГ магазиньсь.

Question 7:

Mar Lera magažin-ys bašt-i-ž?
 what Lera grocery-ELA buy-PST-3SG
 ‘What did Lera buy at the grocery?’

(*kureg* ‘chicken’)

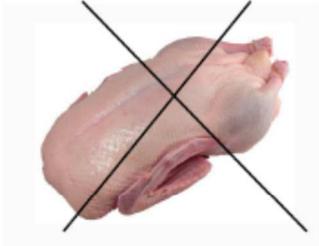
- | | | | | |
|----------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. <i>Lera</i> | KUREG | <i>magažin-ys</i> | <i>bašt-i-ž.</i> | (SO _{FOC} AdvV) |
| Lera | chicken | grocery-ELA | buy-PST-3SG | |
| 2. <i>Lera</i> | <i>magažin-ys</i> | <i>bašt-i-ž</i> | KUREG. | (SAdvVO _{FOC}) |
| Lera | grocery-ELA | buy-PST-3SG | chicken | |
| 3. <i>Lera</i> | <i>magažin-ys</i> | KUREG | <i>bašt-i-ž.</i> | (SAdvO _{FOC} V) |
| Lera | grocery-ELA | chicken | buy-PST-3SG | |
| 4. KUREG | <i>Lera</i> | <i>magažin-ys</i> | <i>bašt-i-ž.</i> | (O _{FOC} SAdvV) |
| chicken | Lera | grocery-ELA | buy-PST-3SG | |
| 5. <i>Lera</i> | <i>bašt-i-ž</i> | <i>magažin-ys</i> | KUREG. | (SVAdvO _{FOC}) |
| Lera | buy-PST-3SG | grocery-ELA | chicken | |
| 6. <i>Lera</i> | <i>bašt-i-ž</i> | KUREG | <i>magažin-ys.</i> | (SVAdvO _{FOC}) |
| Lera | buy-PST-3SG | chicken | grocery-ELA | |
- Intended meaning: ‘It is chicken that Lera bought at the grocery.’

Appendix B

A questionnaire item eliciting contrastive focus in Questionnaire 1

4. юан: Мар Лера магазиньсь басьтїз, курег яке чөж ?

↓ (Курег. Чөж өз)

1. *ответ:* Лера магазиньсь КУРЕГ басьтїз, чөж өз басьты.
2. *ответ:* Лера магазиньсь басьтїз КУРЕГ, чөж өз басьты.
3. *ответ:* КУРЕГ Лера магазиньсь басьтїз, чөж өз басьты.
4. *ответ:* Лера басьтїз КУРЕГ магазиньсь, чөж өз басьты.
5. *ответ:* Лера КУРЕГ магазиньсь басьтїз, чөж өз басьты.
6. *ответ:* Лера басьтїз магазиньсь КУРЕГ, чөж өз басьты.

Question 4:

Mar Lera magažin-yś bašt-i-ž, kureg jake čöž?
 what Lera grocery-ELA buy-PST-3SG chicken or duck
 ‘What did Lera buy at the grocery, chicken or duck?’

(Kureg. Čöž öz)

chicken duck NEG.PST.3

‘Chicken, not duck’ (lit. ‘Chicken. Duck she didn’t)

1. *Lera magažin-yś KUREG bašt-i-ž čöž öz bašty.*
 Lera grocery-ELA chicken buy-PST-3SG duck NEG.PST.3 buy.CNG.SG
 (SAdvO_{FOC}V)
2. *Lera magažin-yś bašt-i-ž KUREG, čöž öz bašty.*
 Lera grocery-ELA buy-PST-3SG chicken duck NEG.PST.3 buy.CNG.SG
 (SAdvVO_{FOC})
3. *KUREG Lera magažin-yś bašt-i-ž čöž öz bašty.*
 chicken Lera grocery-ELA buy-PST-3SG duck NEG.PST.3 buy.CNG.SG
 (O_{FOC}SAdvV)
4. *Lera bašt-i-ž KUREG magažin-yś, čöž öz bašty.*
 Lera buy-PST-3SG chicken grocery-ELA duck NEG.PST.3 buy.CNG.SG
 (SVO_{FOC}Adv)

5. Lera KUREG *magažin-yś* *bašt-i-ž* *čöž* *öž* *bašty*.
Lera chicken grocery-ELA buy-PST-3SG duck NEG.PST.3 buy.CNG.SG
(SO_{FOC}AdvV)
6. Lera *bašt-i-ž* *magažin-yś* KUREG, *čöž* *öž* *bašty*.
Lera buy-PST-3SG grocery-ELA chicken duck NEG.PST.3 buy.CNG.SG
(SVAdvO_{FOC})

Intended meaning: ‘It is chicken that Lera bought at the grocery, not duck.’

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Erika Asztalos

Research Institute for Linguistics, Budapest and Eötvös Loránd University

aszterik@nytud.hu