

## The Chuvash Clitic =Ax and Information-structural Focus

HISHIYAMA, Yuto

JSPS Research Fellow / Niigata University

Chuvash has the clitic =Ax that can be attached to various constituents, including subject, object, adjunct, and predicate. Studies have identified =Ax as an element of emphasis, citing examples of its attachment to various elements; that is, =Ax appears to be a marker associated with focus. However, the relationship between =Ax and information-structural focus has not been well studied. The present study clarifies this relationship by means of example sentence analysis and a consultant survey. The results show that, among the three focus domains, namely, argument focus, predicate focus, and sentence focus, =Ax can appear in at least the first two, with the acceptability being higher in argument focus. Moreover, among the three focus types, namely, contrastive focus, WHA focus (the focus of the answer to a WHQ), and WHQ focus, it can mark at least the first two, with the acceptability being higher in contrastive focus. Therefore, =Ax has the characteristic of being an additional focus marker that tends to mark narrow foci with either or both of the features [+contrastive] and [+exhaustive], which are the most natural cross-linguistic candidates for focus types in need of additional formal marking.

Keywords: Chuvash, clitic, information structure, focus

1. Introduction
2. Information-structural focus
3. The Chuvash clitic =Ax
4. Survey
5. Discussion and conclusion

### 1. Introduction\*

Chuvash, which belongs to the Oghur branch of the Turkic languages, has the clitic =Ax<sup>1</sup>.

---

HISHIYAMA, Yuto. 2024. "The Chuvash Clitic =Ax and Information-structural Focus". In Norikazu Kogura and Kumiko Sato (eds.). *Aspects of Turkic Languages II: Information Structure and Knowledge Management*. pp.71–89. <https://doi.org/10.15026/0002000300>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

\* This research was supported by Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research 23KJ1014 from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science. This paper is a product of the ILCAA joint project "Information Structure and the Grammar of Knowledge in Turkic Languages: Interface of Phonology, Morphosyntax and Semantics (jrp000259)." I deeply appreciate every comment and discussion made at the ILCAA Conference in October 2020, and the kind and sincere comments of the reviewers. I would like to thank Editage ([www.editage.com](http://www.editage.com)) for English language editing.

<sup>1</sup> Capital letters in the suffixes and clitics indicate variability (see section 3). The constituent added by the clitic =Ax in the example sentences and its translations are underlined. The underlined parts do not necessarily correspond to the focus domain, discussed below.

This clitic is attached to various constituents, including subject (1)a, adjunct (1)b, object (1)c, and predicate (1)d.

- (1) a. Вăлах халъ мана пулăшать.  
*văl=ax xal' mana pulăš-at'*  
 3SG=*ax* now 1SG.DAT/ACC help-PRS.3SG  
 '(S)he helps me now.'
- b. Вăл халех мана пулăшать.  
*văl xal=*ex* mana pulăš-at'*  
 3SG now=*ax* 1SG.DAT/ACC help-PRS.3SG  
 '(S)he helps me now.'
- c. Вăл халъ манах пулăшать.  
*văl xal' man=*ax* pulăš-at'*  
 3SG now 1SG.DAT/ACC=*ax* help-PRS.3SG  
 '(S)he helps me now.'
- d. Вăл халъ мана пулăшатех.  
*văl xal' mana pulăš-at=*ex**  
 3SG now 1SG.DAT/ACC help-PRS.3SG=*ax*  
 '(S)he helps me now.'

Studies have identified =*ax* as an element of emphasis, citing examples of its attachment to various elements. In some examples, =*ax* seems to appear in the focal element<sup>2</sup>. However, the relationship between =*ax* and information-structural focus has not been well studied. I thus clarify this relationship by means of example sentence analysis and a consultant survey.

In the remaining paper, section 2 summarizes the domains and types of focus, as well as the focus in Chuvash. Section 3 summarizes the descriptions of previous studies on the clitic =*ax*. Section 4 describes the method and results of the survey. Section 5 discusses the results of the survey, presents the conclusion, and lists future issues.

## 2. Information-structural focus

As generally defined, the information-structural focus is placed on the sentence elements that represent new and/or contrastive information. Section 2.1 discusses the domains and types of focus and section 2.2 discusses focus in Chuvash.

<sup>2</sup> Besides =*ax*, Chuvash has some focal particles/clitics such as *kăna*, *śeś* 'only,' and =*ta* 'also.'

## 2.1. Focus domains and focus types

This study distinguishes three focus domains and three focus types in accordance with Lambrecht (1994) and Shimoji (2015, 2018)<sup>3</sup>. The following is a brief summary of the descriptions of the respective studies (see Lambrecht and Shimoji’s studies for more details).

According to Lambrecht (1994: 222-223), focus can be classified by domain into **predicate focus** (the predicate is the focus and the subject is in the presupposition: “*What happened to your car?*” “*My car/It broke down.*”), **argument focus** (the focus identifies the missing argument in a presupposed open proposition: “*I heard your motorcycle broke down?*” “*My car broke down.*”), and **sentence focus** (the focus extends over both the subject and the predicate: “*What happened?*” “*My car broke down.*”). Table 1 below shows the pragmatic articulation of the three focus-structure categories (+ indicates the presence of the feature and – indicates the absence of the feature).

Table 1 Pragmatic articulation of the three focus-structure categories

	Argument in focus	Predicate in focus
Predicate focus	–	+
Argument focus	+	–
Sentence focus	+	+

(Lambrecht 1994: 236)

Shimoji (2015, 2018) classifies focus by type into **contrastive focus** (evokes a closed set of alternatives and identifies the exhaustive subset: “*Akira is crying, not his brother.*”), **WHQ focus** (a focus instantiated by the questioned element of a WH question: “*Who is crying?*”) and **WHA focus** (a focus instantiated by the answer element in response to a WH question: “*Akira is crying.*”). As shown in Table 2, Shimoji (2018) defines them in terms of the presence (+) or absence (–) of three focus features: contrastiveness, exhaustiveness, and new information<sup>4</sup>.

Table 2 The classification of focus types in terms of focus features

	Contrastive focus	WHA focus	WHQ focus
Contrastive	+	–	–
Exhaustive	+	+	–
New information	+	+	+

(Shimoji 2018: 88)

<sup>3</sup> Shimoji’s 2015 and 2018 papers are studies on focus marking in Ryukyuan languages. In clarifying whether =Ax is a focus marker, it may be effective to use the framework of research on languages that have morphologically explicit focus markers, such as Ryukyuan languages. Future verification is required to determine whether this framework is universal.

<sup>4</sup> Contrastive feature and contrastive focus should not be confused. According to Shimoji (2018: 88), contrastive focus evokes a closed set of alternatives (thus is contrastive) and identifies the exhaustive subset of the closed set of alternatives (thus, it is exhaustive). If the element being contrasted is explicit in the preceding context, the contrastive focus does not have the feature of new information. In the present study, such cases are also included in the contrastive focus.

## 2.2. Focus in Chuvash

There are various strategies for marking focus, including prosodic (using stress, etc.), morphological (using morphemes), and syntactic (using word order). The strategy or the combination of strategies used, varies from language to language. In Chuvash, per my observation, focus can be expressed at least by prosodic and/or syntactic strategies<sup>5</sup>. In the following example, the inverted split sentence shows that the focus is on the word *esě* ‘you (sg.)’ at the beginning of the sentence (syntactic strategy).

(2) Эсех-и Тимафи пиччўне вёлерекенни?

<i>es=ex=i</i>	<i>Timafi pičč-ü-ne</i>	<i>věler-ekenn-i</i>
2SG= <i>Ax</i> =Q PN	e.brother-2SG.POSS-DAT/ACC	kill-PTCP.PRS-NMLZ
‘Is it <u>you</u> who killed brother Timafi?’		

Notably, in this example, =*Ax* appears in the element that is focus-marked by syntactic strategy (and possibly also by the prosodic strategy). In the example above, the focus domain is considered to be (nominal) predicate and the focus type is considered to be contrastive, as the statement asks if it was ‘you’ (Petěr) who killed Timafi and not Kěrkuri. Confirming in which domain of focus it can appear and which type of focus it can mark is the main theme of this study.

## 3. The clitic =*Ax*

The clitic =*Ax* has two allomorphs: =*ax* after syllables with back vowels and =*ex* after syllables with front vowels or palatalized consonants. Unusual for a Chuvash clitic, the final vowel of the preceding word drops when this clitic is attached (e.g. *esex* < *esě* + =*ex*), and it bears accent of its own (these features resemble a suffix). However, it is a syntactic element that is added to the phrase-level constituents rather than to a specific part of speech. Because of these characteristics, I consider it neither a suffix nor a particle, but a clitic. Section 3.1 below summarizes descriptions and examples of previous studies, and section 3.2 raises the issues.

### 3.1. Description and examples of previous studies

As already mentioned, studies have identified =*Ax* as an element of emphasis, citing examples of its attachment to various elements. The most detailed description of the meaning of =*Ax* is found in Ašmarin’s dictionary. Ašmarin (1928–1950) named =*Ax* a limiting particle (Russian: ограничительная частица) and listed eight meanings: amplification (3), clarification (4), oneness (5), assertion (6), emphasis (7), limitation (8),

<sup>5</sup> Prosodic strategies are considered to include the presence or absence of prosodic prominence in the focal element, and syntactic strategies include changes in word order; however, these will not be discussed in detail in this paper.

‘as soon as’ (9), and confusion or despair (10) (Hereinafter, the elements with =Ax and their syntactic roles above each example are my own).

Negative pronoun (object): converb (part of the predicate)

- (3) Никамах та палласах каймастăп-ха эпĕ ял ҫыннисенчен, Пăрăнтăксенчен.  
*nikam=ax=ta palla-s=ax kay-mast-ăp=xa epĕ*  
 nobody.DAT/ACC=Ax=ADD know-CVB.SEQ=Ax go-NEG.PRS-1SG=MOD 1SG  
*yal śinn-i-sençen, Părăntăk-sençen*  
 village person-3.POSS-PL.ABL PN-PL.ABL  
 ‘I don’t really know any of the villagers, of Burundukovskiy.’

Adverb (adjunct)

- (4) Ман хулана ыранах тухса каймалла.  
*man xula-na ĩran=ax tux-sa kay-malla*  
 1SG.GEN city-DAT/ACC tomorrow=Ax go.out-CVB.SEQ go-OBLG  
 ‘I have to leave tomorrow for the city.’

Demonstrative pronoun + head noun (predicate)

- (5) Ёнер килекенĕ ҫав ҫынах.  
*ĕner kil-eken-ĕ śav śin=ax*  
 yesterday come-PTCP.PRS-3.POSS that person=Ax  
 ‘That person is exactly the one who came yesterday.’

Noun (predicate)

- (6) Тарҫă тарҫах вăл, ҫавăнпа сурăхсене пăрахса тарать вăл.  
*tarśă tarś=ax văl, śavănpa surăx-sene părax-sa*  
 servant servant=Ax that therefore sheep-PL.DAT/ACC abandon-CVB.SEQ  
*tar-at’ văl*  
 run.away-PRS.3SG that  
 ‘A servant is a servant, so that guy abandons sheep and runs away.’

Nominalized participle (subject)

- (7) Ҫырмаҫăр хăварас мар; ытлашши ҫырсан та, ҫырниях аван.  
*śir-masăr xăvar-as mar*  
 write-CVB.NEG leave-PTCP.FUT COP.NEG  
*ĭtlašši śir-san=ta śir-n-iy=ax avan*  
 too.much write-CVB.COND=ADD write-PTCP.PST-NMLZ=Ax good  
 ‘You should definitely write it; even if it’s unnecessary, it’s better to write it.’

## Adverb (adjunct)

- (8) Паянах мар, ыран та килĕп.

*paɣan=ax mar iran=ta kil-ĕp*

today=Ax COP.NEG tomorrow=ADD come-FUT.1SG

'I will come not only today, but also tomorrow.'

## Converb (adjunct)

- (9) Пырассăнах каларăм.

*pĭr-sassăn=ax kala-r-ăm*

go-CVB.COND=Ax tell-PST-1SG

'I told him about that as soon as I arrived.'

## Participle (predicate)

- (10) Мĕн тăвасах? Мана тытма килеç, тет!

*mĕn tăv-as=ax mana tĭt-ma kil-eç t-et*

what do-PTCP.FUT=Ax 1SG.DAT/ACC catch-INF come-PRS.3PL say-PRS.3SG

'What to do? They say they're coming to arrest me!'

Krueger (1961: 171) refers to =Ax as an intensifying particle and states that it strengthens the preceding word such as Russian *že* or German *doch, ja*, or the way English speakers stress with the voice, by saying "*He did go there.*"

Sergeev, Andreeva, and Kotleev (2012: 275), in their chapter on the emphatic category of nouns (Chuvash: вайлату категорийĕ), argue that =Ax is an affix forming morphological forms with emphatic meaning, and that this affix can be attached to all parts of speech in Chuvash, citing examples.

## Instrumental noun (adjunct)

- (11) Юлташпах каймалла.

*yultaš-p=ax kay-malla*

comrade-INST=Ax go-OBLG

'You must go with a comrade.'

## Adjective (predicate)

- (12) Кăваккине кăваках ĕнтĕ.

*kăvakk-i-ne kăvak=ax ĕntĕ*

blue-NMLZ-DAT/ACC blue=Ax MOD

'It is blue indeed.'

## Collective number (adjunct)

- (13) Иккĕнех килтĕмĕр.  
*ikkĕn=ex kil-t-ĕmĕr*  
 in.twos=Ax come-PST-1PL  
 ‘We came in twos.’

## Personal pronoun (object)

- (14) Санах параççĕ.  
*san=ax par-aśĕ*  
 2SG.DAT/ACC=Ax give-PRS.3PL  
 ‘They will give it to you.’

## Finite verb (predicate)

- (15) Каятĕпах.  
*kay-at-ăp=ax*  
 go-PRS-1SG=Ax  
 ‘I go.’

Pavlov (2017: 393) lists =Ax as one of the postposed emphatic particles, and states that this particle enhances expressive and emotional speech, citing examples.

## Indefinite pronoun (adjunct)

- (16) Таçсанах кĕтетĕп сана.  
*taçsan=ax kĕt-et-ĕp sana*  
 some.time=Ax wait-PRS-1SG 2SG.DAT/ACC  
 ‘I have been waiting you for a long time.’

## Relative clause + head noun (subject)

- (17) Яла юлнă ватă-вĕтĕпе хĕрарăмсемех тăваяс çук кун пек çула.  
*yal-a yul-nă vată+vĕtĕ-pe xĕrarăm-sem=ax*  
 village-DAT/ACC remain-PTCP.PST old+small-INST woman-PL=Ax  
*tăv-ay-as šuk kun pek šul-a*  
 make-PSB-PTCP.FUT there.isn't this.GEN like road-DAT/ACC  
 ‘There is no way the old men, children and women left in the village can build such a road.’

Zakirova (2019) names =Ax and the equivalents in Tatar, Mari, and Udmurt as particles of emphatic identity, which are collectively denoted by =OK. The functions are described

as emphatic, representing the meaning equivalent to Russian *именно* ‘exactly’ (19, 20, 22), and anti-additive<sup>6</sup>, representing the meaning equivalent to Russian *же* ‘also’ (18, 21).

Noun (subject)

- (18) Маша пахчара ёҗлет, ачасемпе те Машах ларать.  
*Maša paχča-ra ёʃl-et*  
 PN field-LOC work-PRS.3SG  
*ača-sem-pe=te Maš=**ax** lar-at*  
 child-PL-INST=ADD PN=Ax sit-PRS.3SG  
 ‘Masha works in the vegetable garden, and Masha also looks after the children.’  
 (Zakirova 2019: 45)

Demonstrative pronoun + head noun (adjunct)

- (19) Кушак җак кунах шәши тытрё.  
*kušak ʃak kun=**ax** šäši tit-r-ё*  
 cat this day=Ax mouse catch-PST-3SG  
 {I took a cat from the street.} ‘The same day the cat caught a mouse.’  
 (Zakirova 2019: 47)

Personal pronoun + postposition (adjunct)

- (20) Хёрача ун пекех лайәх вёrenteкен пулма шухәшланә.  
*xёrača un pek=**ex** layәx vёrenteken pul-ma šuxәšla-nә*  
 girl 3SG.GEN like=Ax good teacher be-INF think-PRF  
 ‘The girl thought of becoming a good teacher as her teacher was.’  
 (Zakirova 2019: 49)

Adverb (adjunct)

- (21) Җак арşин ачана яланах мухтаҗҗё.  
*ʃak arşin ača-na yalan=**ax** muxt-aşşё*  
 this male child-DAT/ACC always=Ax praise-PRS.3PL  
 ‘This boy is always being praised.’  
 (Zakirova 2019: 56)

<sup>6</sup> “Anti-additive” (Russian: антиаддитивный) is a term used in Kozlov (2017). According to Kozlov (2017), anti-additive context is “a context that is in some sense the opposite of additive. This context has the following presupposition: another property is true about the referent of the focal alternative besides the one mentioned in the statement.”



Locative noun (adjunct)

(22) Унӑн пӑрчӗ школ сумӗнчех ларать.

*unǎn pürč-ě škul šum-ě-nč=ex lar-at'*

3SG.GEN house-3.POSS school side-3.POSS-LOC=Ax sit-PRS.3SG

'His house is right near the school.'

(Zakirova 2019: 57)

### 3.2. Delineating the problem

As evidenced in the literature, studies have identified =Ax as an element of emphasis, citing examples of its attachment to various elements; that is, =Ax appears to be a marker associated with focus. However, the relationship between =Ax and information-structural focus has not been well studied. Only Zakirova (2019) mentions focus when explaining the anti-additive function of =OK but does not discuss the relationship between the Chuvash clitic =Ax and focus in detail. To the best of my knowledge, the literature does not provide the context of the example sentences. Hence, no analysis can be made regarding the focus. I thus examine the relationship between =Ax and focus based on examples that include context.

## 4. Survey

### 4.1. Methods

To achieve the objective of this study, example sentence analysis and a consultant survey were conducted. The example sentences were extracted from an online corpus of Chuvash "Chuvash bilingual corpus" (Chuvash: Чӑваш чӗлхин икчӗлхеллӗ сӳпси)<sup>7</sup> and the news website "Chuvash national site" (Chuvash: Чӑваш халӑх сайчӗ). First, I searched these sites (mainly the corpus) for forms of various words with the clitic =Ax and extracted examples. Next, I identified the focus domains and types in the examples looking at the context.

For the consultant survey, I first asked my consultant<sup>8</sup> to translate the survey example sentences of Kazama (2016a, b)<sup>9</sup> on focus domains and types from Russian into Chuvash.

<sup>7</sup> An untagged corpus of about 14.94 million words (as of May 14, 2023), with many example sentences with Russian translations. As of May 2023, the total number of words continues to increase owing to intermittent updating (adding new texts and translating them into Russian). It consists mainly of newspaper and magazine articles, news, prose collections, and religious texts.

<sup>8</sup> My consultant (male, year of birth: 1999) is a native speaker of Chuvash who was born in and grew up in the Mariinsko-Posadsky District. This district is located in the northeast of the Chuvash Republic.

<sup>9</sup> According to Kazama (2016a: 40), the example sentences were created for the purpose of verifying in other languages the two focus hierarchies presented by Shimoji (2015) regarding Ryukyuan languages (The Focus Hierarchy 1: Contrastive Focus > WHA Focus > WHQ Focus; The Focus Hierarchy 2: Argument Focus > Predicate Focus). Shimoji (2015) states that, in Ryukyuan languages, if a focus marker can be used at a certain point in the hierarchies, it can also be used with the focus type to the left of it. In this study, these example sentences were used to investigate the relationship between =Ax and focus domains/focus types.

Next, for those in which =*Ax* did not appear in the focal element, I presented the consultant with =*Ax* in the focal element, and asked him to choose between “acceptable,” “unnatural (?)” or “unacceptable (\*)” to determine the level of acceptance. The survey example sentences in Russian are as follows (Focus types and focus domains in parentheses are partially modified by me).

- [1] Э, Саша пришёл? – Нет, это не Саша, это Коля пришёл.  
‘Hey, is Sasha here? – No, it’s not Sasha, it’s Kolya.’ [Argument: Contrastive]
- [2] Кто пришёл? – Саша.  
‘Who’s here? – Sasha.’ [Argument: WHQ, WHA]
- [3] Разве Саша не выше? – Нет, Коля выше Саши.  
‘Isn’t Sasha taller? – No, Kolya is taller than Sasha.’ [Argument: Contrastive]
- [4] По телефону: Что случилось? – Эм, только что пришёл посетитель.  
‘On the phone: What happened? – Um, a visitor just came in.’ [Sentence: WHQ, WHA]
- [5] Этот ребёнок побил Колю? – Нет, он побил не Колю, а Сашу.  
‘Did this kid beat Kolya? – No, he didn’t beat Kolya, he beat Sasha.’ [Argument: Contrastive]
- [6] Пакеты есть и красные и синие, ты какой возьмёшь? – Я возьму синий.  
‘There are both red and blue bags, which one will you take? – I’ll take the blue one.’ [Argument: Contrastive]
- [7] Где Саша? – Он куда-то ушёл ещё утром.  
‘Where is Sasha? – He went somewhere in the morning.’ [Intended: Predicate: WHQ, WHA]
- [8] Кого побил этот ребёнок? – Он побил своего младшего брата.  
‘Who did this child beat? – He beat his little brother.’ [Argument: WHQ, WHA]
- [9] По телефону: Что случилось? – Эм, Саша побил своего младшего брата.  
‘On the phone: What happened? – Um, Sasha beat his little brother.’ [Sentence: WHQ, WHA]

In [7], the Russian translation of the question sentence is an expression asking for location. It is problematic as an example sentence to investigate the predicate focus. Therefore, the survey example sentences [7b, 7c], prepared by me based on Shimoji (2018: 98), were used instead of [7].

- [7b] Что делаешь? – Я пью водку.  
‘What are you doing? – I am drinking vodka.’ [Predicate: WHQ, WHA]

[7c] Я не работаю, а пью водку.

‘I am not working but drinking vodka.’ [Predicate: Contrastive]

## 4.2. Results

The results show that, among the three focus domains, namely, argument focus, predicate focus, and sentence focus, the clitic =Ax can appear in at least the first two. Moreover, among the three focus types, namely, contrastive focus, WHA focus, and WHQ focus, it can mark at least the first two. Section 4.2.1 below describes the results of the example sentence analysis and section 4.2.2 describes the results of the consultant survey.

### 4.2.1. Example sentence analysis

The examples extracted from the corpus and their contexts indicate that =Ax can appear in focal arguments and predicates, and can mark contrastive focus and (to a lesser extent) WHA focus. Examples of each are given below.

Argument Focus: Contrastive Focus

(23) Petya: ‘Can you listen to me?’

Dunya: ‘Go tell your aunt.’

Аппа итлесшён мар. Эпё санах каласа парап. Дуня, тетёп.

*appa itl-esšën mar*

aunt listen-OPT COP.NEG

*epě san=ax kala-sa par-ap*

1SG 2SG.DAT/ACC=Ax tell-CVB.SEQ give-PRS.1SG

*Dunja t-et-ěp*

PN say-PRS-1SG

Petya: ‘Auntie doesn’t want to. I’d rather tell you. Dunya, I said.’

Dunya: ‘Go and tell your father.’

Petya: ‘Oh, God, you’re so silly! Papa knows it already.’

Dunya: ‘Tomorrow, Petya, tomorrow.’

Манӑн паянах калас килет!

*manñn payan=ax kal-as kil-et*

1SG.GEN today=Ax tell-PTCP.FUT come-PRS.3SG

Petya: ‘I want to tell you today!’

## Predicate Focus / WHA Focus

- (24) — Машина йста?  
‘Where is the car?’

— Машина халь те унтах.  
*mašina xal’=te unt=ax*  
car now=ADD there=Ax  
‘The car is still there.’

However, it is difficult to determine whether =Ax marks sentence focus or WHQ focus because compared with other focus areas and focus types, it was much more difficult to find examples where it is certain that =Ax marks these foci.

The following example is one of the few news headlines with =Ax added to the end of the sentence. This news is not a follow-up report. Hence, the entire sentence appears to be new information (sentence focus) at first glance.

- (25) Некей палăкё пулатех  
*Nekey palăk-ě pul-at’=ex*  
PN statue-3.POSS be-PRS.3SG=Ax  
‘A statue of Nekey will be (built)’

However, it cannot be excluded that the subject (Nekey’s statue) may be a presupposed element for the author. The author describes the process of the statue’s foundation being laid for three days and that all that remains to do is to install the statue itself. All of this information was given in direct past tense, which means that the author has first-hand experience on the event. Therefore, it is possible that, in this headline, the focus is on the predicate only. Other headlines with predicates of the same form (*pul-at’=ex*) also had some sort of presuppositions because they were follow-up reports.

As for WHQ focus, although there are examples of question words with =Ax, their frequency of occurrence is very low. Most of them represent rhetorical questions, and thus do not fit the definition of WHQ focus<sup>10</sup>.

- (26) Ну, килте мёнех пур вара?  
*nu, kil-te mён=ex pur vara*  
so house-LOC what=Ax there.is MOD  
‘So, what is in the house?’ (The dialogue of a character who tries to run away from

<sup>10</sup> According to Shimoji (2018: 90), WHQ focus does not evoke a closed set of alternatives (i.e., is non-contrastive) nor exclude the subset of a set of alternatives for which predication potentially holds (thus is non-exhaustive).

home)

(27) — *Ăçтах кайăн ėнтĕ? Йĕри-тавра — нимĕçсем.*

*ăšt=ax kay-ăn ėntĕ? yeri+tavra nimĕš-sem*

where=Ax go-FUT.2SG MOD around German-PL

(In the World War II) ‘Where will you go? There are Germans everywhere.’

#### 4.2.2. Consultant survey

The study found that =Ax does not appear in all of the example sentences translated by the consultant<sup>11</sup>. The acceptability of the focal element with =Ax is shown in Table 3 below (OK represents “acceptable,” ? represents “unnatural,” and \* represents “unacceptable”).

Table 3 Consultant survey results

Argument focus			Predicate focus			Sentence focus	
Contrastive	WHA	WHQ	Contrastive	WHA	WHQ	WHA	WHQ
[1, 3, 5, 6]	[2, 8]	[2, 8]	[7c]	[7b]	[7b]	[4, 9]	[4, 9]
OK ~ ?	?	*	?	*	*	*	*

As is clear from Table 3, the acceptability of =Ax by focus domain is highest for argument focus and lowest for sentence focus; the acceptability by focus type is highest for contrastive focus and lowest for WHQ focus.

The results presented below are broken down by focus domain and focus type: argument focus (contrastive focus) in A, argument focus (WHA focus and WHQ focus) in B, predicate focus in C, and sentence focus in D.

##### A. Argument focus (Contrastive focus)

Examples of argument focus (contrastive focus) are [1, 3, 5, 6]. According to the consultant, when =Ax is attached to the focal element in the response sentence, [1, 6] are “acceptable” but [3, 5] are “unnatural.” However, [3, 5] would be “acceptable” if the element in the question sentence (underlined) also has =Ax (if they are *Saš=ax* and *Kolja-n=ax*, respectively).

[1] ‘Hey, is Sasha here? – No, it’s not Sasha, it’s Kolya.’

— О, Саша килчĕ-и?

o, Saša kil-ĕ-ĕ=i

oh PN come-PST-3SG=Q

<sup>11</sup> Note that Kazama (2021) lists Chuvash translations by another consultant, and there is also no example sentence in which =Ax appears in the focal element.

— Çук, Саша мар, Коля килчѣ ку.

*śuk, saša mar; [Kolja (Kolj=ax)]<sub>F</sub> kil-č-ě ku*  
 no PN COP.NEG PN(=Ax) come-PST-3SG this

[3] ‘Isn’t Sasha taller? – No, Kolya is taller than Sasha.’

— Саша тухмарѣ-и?

*Saša tux-ma-r-ě=i*  
 PN go.out-NEG-PST-3SG=Q

— Çук, Саша мар, Коля тухрѣ.

*śuk, Saša mar; [Kolja (?Kolj=ax)]<sub>F</sub> tux-r-ě*  
 no PN COP.NEG PN(=Ax) go.out-PST-3SG

[5] ‘This kid beat Kolya? – No, he didn’t beat Kolya, he beat Sasha.’

— Ку ача Кольяна патак паня-и?

*ku ača Koljā-na patak pa-nā=i*  
 this child PN-DAT/ACC hit-PRF=Q

— Çук, Кольяна мар, Сашяна патак паня.

*śuk, Koljā-na mar; [Sašā-na (?Sašā-n=ax)]<sub>F</sub> patak pa-nā*  
 no PN-DAT/ACC COP.NEG PN-DAT/ACC(=Ax) hit-PRF

[6] ‘There are both red and blue bags, which one will you take? – I’ll take the blue one.’

— Хѣрлѣ те кявакя тѣслѣ пакет та пур. Эсѣ хяшне илетѣн?

*xěrlě=te kāvakā tēs-lě paket=ta pur*  
 red=ADD blue color-PROP bag=ADD there.is  
*esě xāš-ne il-et-ěn*  
 2SG which.3.POSS-DAT/ACC take-PRS-2SG

— Кяваккине илетѣп.

*[kāvakk-i-ne (kāvakk-i-n=ex)]<sub>F</sub> il-et-ěp*  
 blue-NMLZ-DAT/ACC(=Ax) take-PRS-1SG

## B. Argument focus (WHQ focus and WHA focus)

Examples of argument focus (WHQ focus and WHA focus) are in [2, 8]. According to the consultant, adding =Ax to the focal element of a response sentence (WHA focus) is “unnatural” in both cases, while adding =Ax to the focal element of a question (WHQ focus) in a question sentence is “unacceptable.”

[2] ‘Who’s here? – Sasha.’

— Кам килчĕ?

[*kam* (\**kam=ax*)]<sub>F</sub> *kil-č-ĕ*  
 who(=Ax)            come-PST-3SG

— Саша.

[*Saša* (ʔ*Saš=ax*)]<sub>F</sub>  
 PN(=Ax)

[8] ‘Who did this child beat? – He beat his little brother.’

— Ку ача кама шакканă?

*ku ača* [*kam-a* (\**kam=ax*)]<sub>F</sub> *šakka-nă*  
 this child who-DAT/ACC(=Ax) hit-PRF

— Вăл хăйĕн шăллăмне патак панă.

*văl* [*xăy-ĕn šăllăm-ne* (ʔ*šăllăm-n=ex*)]<sub>F</sub> *patak pa-nă*  
 3SG self.3-GEN y.brother.3.POSS-DAT/ACC(=Ax) hit-PRF

### C. Predicate focus

Examples of predicate focus are in [7b, 7c]. According to the consultant, adding =Ax to the focal elements in [7b] (WHQ focus and WHA focus) is “unacceptable,” while in [7c] (contrastive focus) is “unnatural.”

[7b] ‘What are you doing? – I am drinking vodka.’

— Мĕн тăватăн?

[*mĕn tăv-at-ăn* (\**tăv-at-ăn=ax*)]<sub>F</sub>  
 what do-PRS-2SG(=Ax)

— Эрех ĕçетĕп.

[*erex ĕš-et-ĕp* (\**ĕš-et-ĕp=ax*)]<sub>F</sub>  
 vodka drink-PRS-1SG(=Ax)

[7c] ‘I am not working but drinking vodka.’

Эпĕ ĕçлеместĕп, эрех ĕçетĕп.

*epĕ ĕšle-mest-ĕp* [*erex ĕš-et-ĕp* (ʔ*ĕš-et-ĕp=ax*)]<sub>F</sub>  
 1SG work-NEG.PRS-1SG vodka drink-PRS-1SG(=Ax)

## D. Sentence Focus

Examples of sentence focus are in [4, 9]. According to the consultant, any sentence-final predicate of a sentence with =Ax is “unacceptable.”

[4] ‘On the phone: What happened? – Um, a visitor just came in.’

— Мѐн пулчѐ?

**[mĕn pul-ĉ-ĕ (\*pul-ĉ=ex)]<sub>F</sub>**

what be-PST-3SG(=Ax)

— Эм, халѐ сын килчѐ.

**em, [xalĕ śin kil-ĉ-ĕ (\*kil-ĉ=ex)]<sub>F</sub>**

um now person come-PST-3SG(=Ax)

[9] ‘On the phone: What happened? – Um, Sasha beat up his little brother.’

— Мѐн пулнĕ?

**[mĕn pul-nĕ (\*pul-n=ax)]<sub>F</sub>**

what be-PRF(=Ax)

— Эм, Саша хĕйĕн шĕллĕмне патак панĕ.

**em, [Saša xĕy-ĕn śĕllĕm-ne patak pa-nĕ (\*pa-n=ax)]<sub>F</sub>**

um PN self.3-GEN y.brother.3.POSS-DAT/ACC hit-PRF(=Ax)

## 5. Discussion and conclusion

The results show that, among the three focus domains, namely, argument focus, predicate focus, and sentence focus, the clitic =Ax can appear in at least the first two, with the acceptability being higher in argument focus. Moreover, among the three focus types, namely, contrastive focus, WHA focus, and WHQ focus, it can mark at least the first two, with the acceptability being higher in contrastive focus. Based on the results, it can be said that =Ax tends to appear in narrow focus with either or both of the features [+contrastive] and [+exhaustive].

According to Zimmermann and Onea (2011: 1668), the most natural cross-linguistic candidates for focus types in need of additional formal marking involve the notions of contrast and exhaustiveness. Considering that =Ax is most likely to be used to mark contrastive focus, which has both of the notions, =Ax has characteristics of being an additional focus marker that additionally marks such foci.



As mentioned in section 3, the function of =Ax has been considered as an emphasis in previous studies. Zimmermann (2008: 347) argues that the less expected the focus content is judged to be for the hearer, the more likely a speaker is to mark the focus constituent by means of special grammatical devices, thus giving rise to emphasis.

In fact, in many examples, =Ax appears on the constituent, the content of which is judged to be less expected for the hearer, as in the example below. Unlike [7b] and [7c], the consultant identified the following as natural contexts in which =Ax appears in the verb ‘drink.’

(28) — Ваçça, эрех ёçсе ыванса çитмерён-и эсё, мёскён.  
 ‘Vasya, are you tired of drinking vodka, poor you.’

— Çук, çитмерём. Эпё паян та эрех ёçетёпех.  
*śuk śit-me-r-ëm epě payan=ta erex ёś-et-ёp=ex*  
 no reach-NEG-PST-1SG 1SG today=ADD vodka drink-PRS-1SG=Ax  
 ‘No, not yet. I will drink vodka again today.’

In this example, Vasya states that he ‘will drink vodka again today’ to a listener who is concerned about his excessive drinking. The content of the verb phrase ‘I drink vodka again today’ is difficult for the listener to expect, who expects that Vasya will stop drinking vodka.

Many of the various meanings of =Ax that previous studies cite may have derived from its function of expressing the speaker’s judgment that the listener does not expect its content<sup>12</sup>. The low acceptability of =Ax in several example sentences in the consultant survey, despite the focus domain and type in which =Ax can appear, may be due to the fact that the nuance of unexpectedness by the listener could not be assumed in the context.

Given that the morphological strategy (addition of =Ax) is used for focus marking in addition to prosodic and syntactic strategies, the critical issue is their interaction. As can be seen from example (2), =Ax can appear in elements focused by syntactic strategy. According to İşsever (2003: 1032–1033), the immediately pre-verbal slot is generally claimed to be the default focus position in Turkish. Assuming the same is true in Chuvash, =Ax may also appear in the element which is in the default focus position<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> Of course, there are cases where =Ax expresses a meaning that cannot be explained by this function. Also, =Ax appears most frequently in specific adverbs. It is a future task to clarify the details of the distribution and function of =Ax.

<sup>13</sup> In the (29), the word order is SVO. However, the basic word order of Chuvash is SOV, the same as Turkish. Therefore, the immediately pre-verbal slot can be considered the default focus position in Chuvash as well.

(29) Эпех вѣлертѣм Тимафи пиччене...

*ep=ex vĕler-t-ĕm Timafi pičĕ-ne*

1SG=*Ax* kill-PST-1SG PN e.brother-DAT/ACC

‘It was me who killed brother Timafi.’

Since the focus can be marked by the syntactic strategy (and possibly also by the prosodic strategy), (2) and (29) are examples of additional formal marking by =*Ax*. Conversely, there are examples where the focus is marked by the addition of =*Ax* (and possibly also by the prosodic strategy) without a syntactic strategy, as in (1a). A close examination of the interrelationships among the focus marking strategies is a topic for future work.

Similar morphemes in other Turkic languages and surrounding Uralic languages (Mari and Udmurt) should also be investigated from the viewpoint of information structure, and contrasted with Chuvash as a future task.

### Abbreviations

1, 2, 3	1st, 2nd, 3rd person	OBLG	obligatoriness
ACC	accusative	OPT	optative
ADD	additive	PL	plural
ADJLZ	adjectivalizer	PN	person name
COND	conditional	POSS	possessive
COP	copula	PRF	perfect
CVB	converb	PRS	present
DAT	dative	PSB	possibility
FUT	future	PST	past
GEN	genitive	PTCP	participle
IMP	imperative	Q	question
INST	instrumental	SEQ	sequential
LOC	locative	SG	singular
MOD	modality	-	suffix boundary
NEG	negative	=	clitic boundary
NMLZ	nominalizer	+	compound boundary

### References

- Ašmarin, Nikolaj I.. 1928–1950. *Čávaš sãmaxĕšen kĕneki*. I–XVII. Kazan’–Čeboksary. (<http://samah.chv.su/dict/8.html>) [Accessed: 2023/6/10]

- Čävaš čēlxin ikčēlxellē šüpśi [Chuvash bilingual corpus] (<http://corpus.chv.su/>) [Accessed: 2020/6/18]
- Čävaš xalāx sayčē [Chuvash national site] (<https://chuvash.org>) [Accessed: 2020/6/20]
- İşsever, Selçuk. 2003. "Information structure in Turkish: the word order - prosody interface". *Lingua* 113(11). pp.1025–1053.
- Kazama, Shinjiro. 2016a. "Foreword". *Journal of the Institute of Language Research* 21. pp.17–44.
- . 2016b. "Nanay". *Journal of the Institute of Language Research* 21. pp.259–268.
- . 2021. "Chuvash: 'Transitivity,' 'Voice and related expressions,' 'Passive expression,' 'Aspect', 'Modality' and 'Information structure and nominal predicate sentences' ". *Journal of the Institute of Language Research* 26. pp.501–555.
- Kozlov, Aleksej A.. 2017. "Gornomarijskaja častica =ok i grani emfatičeskoj identičnosti". *Tipologija morfosintaksičeskix parametrov. Vyp. 4. Materialy meždunarodnoj konferencii «Tipologija morfosintaksičeskix parametrov 2017»*. pp.240–254.
- Krueger, John R.. 1961. *Chuvash Manual. Introduction, Grammar, Reader, and Vocabulary*. Indiana University Publications, Uralic and Altaic Series 7. The Hague: Mouton.
- Lambrecht, Knud. 1994. *Information structure and sentence form. Topic, focus and the mental representations of discourse referents*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pavlov, Ivan P.. 2017. *Sovremennyj Čuvaškij jazyk: monografija: v 2 tomax. Tom 2: Morfologija*. Čeboksary: Čuvaškij gosudarstvennyj institut gumanitarnyx nauk.
- Sergeev, Leonid P., Evdokija A. Andreeva, and Vitalij I. Kotleev. 2012. *Čävaš čēlxi: čävaš filologi fakul'tečēn studenčesem valli xatērlenē vērenü kēneki*. Šupaškar: Čävaš kēneke izdatel'stvi.
- Shimoji, Michinori. 2015. "Focus marking and case marking" [in Japanese]. *The 151st LSJ Meeting Handbook*. pp.396–401.
- . 2018. "Information Structure, Focus, and Focus-Marking Hierarchies in Ryukyuan Languages". *Gengo Kenkyu* 154. pp.85–121.
- Timberlake, Alan. 2004. *A reference grammar of Russian*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Zakirova, Ajgul' N.. 2019. *Časticy emfatičeskoj identičnosti v povolžskom jazykovom sojuze*. Master's dissertation. Moskva: Nacional'nyj issledovatel'skij universitet.
- Zimmermann, Malte. 2008. "Contrastive Focus and Emphasis". *Acta Linguistica hungarica* 55(3-4). pp.347–360.
- Zimmermann, Malte and Edgar Onea. 2011. "Focus Marking and Focus Interpretation". *Lingua* 121. pp.1651–1670.