Finnisch-Ugrische Mitteilungen

Grammars of Udmurt in German have a tradition which goes back more than 160 years. Ferdinand Johann Wiedemann’s *Grammatik der wotjakischen Sprache* appeared in Tallinn in 1851, and is still an indispensable work, which could not be superseded by Yrjö Wichmann’s 1901 *Wotjakische Chrestomathie*, which in any case only consisted of texts and a wordlist; the second edition of 1954 was supplemented with a useful but very brief overview of Udmurt grammar from the pen of Dávid Fokos-Fuchs. Disregarding here Udmurt- and Russian-language grammars published in the USSR and Russia, the works available in Finnish (e.g. Kel’makov & Hännikäinen 1999, second edition from 2008) and Hungarian (e.g. Csúcs 1990, Kozmács 2002) are more aimed at students learning the language; Moreau’s 2009 French-language chrestomathy is a more general work, and these are certainly to some extent also not linguistically accessible to a wider readership.

Winkler’s *Udmurtische Grammatik* is a novelty in the VSUA series, the first grammar of a Uralic lesser-used language which is not extinct and which is of practical use. It is an expanded, German-language version of Winkler’s 2001 concise grammar of Udmurt published by Lincom: the 2001 grammar had 88 pages, the present one 188. Such a book is of course exceptionally welcome and necessary, as, notwithstanding the existence of the abovementioned books, extensive up-to-date information on Udmurt in a major Western language is still not easy to come by.

The grammar is organised in the classical manner: the introduction is followed by phonology (6 pages), morphonology (4 pages), morphology and morphosyntax (110 pages), and syntax (35 pages). The bibliography is followed by two appendices: one has a transliteration table for the Cyrillic alphabet, the other a list of inflectional forms of nouns and verbs in Cyrillic.

In the introduction Winkler states that, according to the Russian census of 2002, ca. 464 000 of the 637 000 Udmurts in Russia spoke Udmurt, i.e. just under 73%, down from 89% in 1959. Preliminary results for the 2010 census have only just been published, but they are alarming: the total number of people identifying as Udmurts is now 552 299, and the total number of speakers\(^1\) is 324 338, i.e. just under 59%. The relative and absolute number of speakers has therefore again declined (in comparison to 1989), but the rate of decline is increasing too. Winkler continues with a brief enumeration of the dialects (which in any case are not significantly different from the standard language) and a few notes on language contact with Tatar and Russian, and gives a short overview of research on the Udmurt language since Messerschmidt and Strah-

\(^1\) Not necessarily all Udmurts, but very few non-Udmurts speak Udmurt.
lenberg collected their word lists in the 1720s. Dialectal differences and historical asides are, however, occasionally included in the running text in smaller font; a number of dialectal differences have of course also been taken up in the standard language, though they are not always pointed out where variants are given (e.g. of the negated forms of the second pluperfect given on page 109, the analytic forms are southern, the synthetic ones northern). Examples usually consist of four lines, with a morpheme-by-morpheme Latin transliteration, followed by Cyrillic in a slightly smaller font, then the glosses in German with grammatical category labels, and finally a German translation. An example:

\begin{verbatim}
as-la-m  korka-je  
ac-за-m   корка-e  
selfst-GEN-1SG  haus-1SG  
'mein eigenes Haus'
\end{verbatim}

In the chapter on phonetics Winkler usefully lists the phonemes of Udmurt both in UPA and IPA; in the rest of the book only UPA is used. A transliteration table of the Udmurt Cyrillic alphabet is given as an appendix; perhaps it would be have been more useful at the beginning.

Confusing is Winkler’s transliteration of the alveolo-palatal fricatives <сь> and <зь> as UPA /š/ and /ž/, respectively, instead of /ś/ and /ź/; Udmurt <ӧ>, a close-mid central unrounded vowel, transliterated in UPA as /e̮/, is /ɘ/ in IPA, not /ǝ/.

Interesting is the comment on how, due to Russian influence, palatal consonants are sometimes pronounced as palatalized dento-alveolar consonants (as can happen e.g. in modern Mari). Previously, it tended to be the other way round: i.e. when speaking Russian Udmurts would pronounce Russian palatalized consonants as palatal consonants (cf. Pozdeeva 1986: 49). Here also the Uralic Phonetic Alphabet is especially infelicitous, as its ň in IPA equates with both palatal [ɲ] and palatalized [nʲ], causing all manners of grief in many descriptions of Uralic languages with palatal and/or palatalized consonants.

Other instances of Russian influence are occasionally pointed out by Winkler, e.g. agentive use of the instrumental, use of the particle ik ‘-self; still; very’, use of the morphological comparative, borrowed elements used in the formation of the superlative, passive use of reflexive verbs in the third person plural, and concurrent use of borrowed Russian conjunctions with native conjunctions. The influence of Tatar has historically of course been very strong too, and instantiations of such influence are also occasionally mentioned (the dialectal secondary development of vowel harmony, prefixes borrowed from Tatar used

\footnote{2 A minor misprint also has to be pointed out here: the UPA rendition of the voiced alveolo-palatal affricate on the chart on page 19 is written as ć, its voiceless counterpart; the chart on page 182 is correct.}
in indefinite pronouns, borrowed superlative particles, borrowed diminutive suffixes; lack of personal suffixes in the singular conditional is probably also due to Turkic influence. Though pointing out all possible cases of Russian or Turkic influence is not an objective of a synchronic grammatical description of Udmurt, the target audience will no doubt be appreciative of such occasional notes, as of the asides on dialectal differences.

The 110-page section on morphology and morphosyntax is the longest in the book. It starts with an overview of the morphological structure of the Udmurt word, and continues to deal with the traditional parts of speech, where their use is usually illustrated with five or so example sentences. Udmurt has a rich morphology, and therefore especially useful are the numerous explicit charts and tables of e.g. case suffixes (p. 41), possessive suffixes (p.60), indefinite pronouns (p. 75), person suffixes (p. 94), tense suffixes (p. 95), negated forms (p. 106–7), which allow users to gain comprehensive overviews of the existing possibilities. Illustrative diagrams are sometimes included to clarify certain points, such as e.g. the parameters for object case choice, or possible suffixes occurring in infinite forms.

As in a number of other Uralic languages, possessive suffixes are used not only to denote possession, but also mark definiteness (and other functions; cf. Edygarova 2010), where the difference between use of the 2nd and 3rd person singular possessive suffixes is perhaps not as clear as it is in Komi. In addition, the 3rd person singular possessive suffix can function as a determiner (e.g. pič́-jez small-DET ‘the small one’) and as a very useful nominalizer (e.g. Ivan-len Ivan-GEN ‘Ivan’s’ >Ivan-len-ez Ivan-GEN-NOMIN ‘the one of Ivan’s’ >Ivan-len-ez-len Ivan-GEN-NOMIN-GEN ‘the one of the one of Ivan’s’), similar to the Hungarian anaphoric possessive morpheme -é. The nominalizer reminds one of similar constructions in Altaic (cf. Luutonen 2012), where e.g. in Turkish the nominalizing suffix -ki, which is used to form attributive adjectival phrases and pronominal expressions, can also nominalize inflected forms, so that a word may have more than one case suffix: ev-de-ki-ler-de house-LOC-NOMIN-PL-LOC ‘at/on in the ones in the house’ (Göksel & Kerslake 2005: 68). So-called ‘double case’ can also occur without the nominalizer, where clausal and phrasal function is marked separately on a word with two case suffixes.

Referring to Kozmács’ (1998) article, Winkler repeats the claims that Udmurt makes a clusivity distinction in the 1st person plural, using the personal pronoun mi as an exclusive ‘we’ and the intensifier ašmeos as an inclusive ‘we’. This was already hinted at by the 1983 URS: ašmeos is translated as ‘my; my s toboj, my s vami’, whilst mi is simply translated as ‘my’. Perhaps more research is needed on this topic, but if it would prove to be the case that Udmurt does make this distinction, then it would be the only non-Caucasian language in Europe to do so.
Winkler (95) refers to nine grammatical tenses: four synthetic and five analytic ones. Practically every grammar of Udmurt lists a different number of tenses and moods, and as pointed out by e.g. Csúcs (1990: 51) and Napolskikh (2003: 297), the question of how many tenses and/or moods Udmurt has, has still not been satisfactorily answered, let alone what their exact functions are; on top there is much dialectal variation. Here again the various tables give useful overviews of the personal forms, which often include elements of heterogeneous origin, as in e.g. the 1st perfect. The analytic tenses are the most problematic ones, evincing both non-evidential and evidential meanings (when used with višem, the perfect participle of the existential verb vań), depending on context. Evidentiality can also be expressed with the evidential particle pe, which can also occur together with višem. Here too perhaps more research needs to be done on the choices and co-occurrence of these evidential elements.

Another useful overview is that of clausal negation, which in Udmurt can be expressed using a negative verb, a negative particle, negative forms of the existential, and suffixes. Here influence from Turkic is again evident: in the perfect the northern and central dialects use the analytic construction, as e.g. evel miškem ‘I did not go’, whilst southern dialects, due to Turkic influence, use a suffixal form: miškimteje ‘id.’ (the standard language and Besermyan use both). Winkler’s example has the personal suffix -je in the first person, but, depending on the source, it need not necessarily be present.

The section on syntax contains four main parts: sentence types, sentence moods, simple and complex sentences. Winkler could make good use here of recent work on Udmurt by e.g. Svetlana Edygarova, who has given a detailed description of possession in Udmurt in her 2010 PhD, but he is also forced to point out that for example the following issues are not particularly well studied, or, in some cases, not at all: use of the nominalizer and its productivity, use of transitive verbs plus reflexive pronoun versus use of reflexive verbs, the productivity of composition as word-formation, the use of various non-finites and converbs, and the formation and use of noun-verb compounds and phrasal verbs, and use of the dative case to denote the direct object. Drawing attention to such questions is a particularly useful aspect of this grammar; many of the problematic issues could be profitably explored in other Uralic languages too.

Summing up, the present grammar is undoubtedly the most up-to-date source on Udmurt in any language; when using it one is reminded of the fact that the last volume of the three-volume Russian-language ‘academic’ grammar of Udmurt is already nearly 40 years old, and cannot answer many of the questions one might have about the Udmurt language. Two other major aspects of the present grammar are of importance: the fact that is written in German, making information on Udmurt available to a wider public, and Winkler’s predilection for pointing out under-researched areas of Udmurt grammar. One negative
feature of the physical book must be mentioned: as it is not bound but glued the pages already start to drop out after some months of use.

References


Kozmács, István 1998. Inkluzív személyes névmás a finnugor nyelveken?


