

# Lexical markers of evidentiality, inference and epistemic modality in Meadow Mari

Bogáta Timár

Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest

## INTRODUCTION

Meadow Mari (Uralic > Finno-Ugric > Volgaic) is traditionally considered to have a „small” or „indirect” evidential system (Plungian 2010) encoded in the 2nd past tense (Saypasheva 2016; Nelson & Vedernikova 2017; Skribnik & Kehayov 2018).

(1) Meadow Mari  
Miša kum ludym **pyšten**.  
Misha three duck.ACC **shoot.PST2.3SG**  
,Misha shot three ducks (and I didn’t see it)‘.

In addition to suffixal evidentiality, some Uralic languages have specialized particles to mark the information source.

(2) Komi-Zyrian  
nyvjas! Diskoteka **põ** poz’õ kotyrlyny!  
girls disco **REP** can.3SG organize.INF  
,Girls! **They said** that one can set up a discotheque!’

## OBJECTIVES

Meadow Mari is rich in modal particles ( cf. Riese et al. 2019: 337-364)

particle	English
<i>ala</i>	‘maybe, probably, could be’
<i>ala mo</i>	,possibly, apparently
<i>ale vara</i>	‘really, indeed, is it possible’
<i>aman</i>	‘apparently, it looks like, it would seem’
<i>anjat</i>	‘perhaps, possibly, could be, maybe’
<i>vekat</i>	‘probably, perhaps, it seems, I guess’
<i>vet</i>	‘so, indeed, well, as you know, really, you see; isn’t it’
<i>vitnie</i>	‘apparently, evidently, looks like’
<i>gaj</i>	‘it seems, ... might, like’
<i>dokan</i>	‘probably, perhaps, it seems’
<i>dyr</i>	‘probably, perhaps, it seems’
<i>koješ</i>	‘it seems, looks like’
<i>možyč</i>	‘perhaps, maybe, possibly’
<i>moli</i>	‘maybe, perhaps, aren’t (you)’
<i>naverne</i>	‘probably, most likely, in all likelihood; certainly, for sure’
<i>očyni</i>	‘probably, most likely, surely’
<i>požale</i>	‘probably, very likely, most likely’
<i>už</i>	‘to be sure, indeed, certainly’
<i>užai(at)</i>	‘as I see, as I can see, it’s visible, it’s apparent’
<i>čaj</i>	‘probably, apparently, presumably; after all’
<i>šonet</i>	‘it seems, it’s like, it’s as if’

To categorize Meadow Mari modal particles based on the following parameters:

- does it encode information source (evidentiality)
- does it encode reasoning (inference)
- does it encode the speaker’s attitude to the truth value of the proposition (epistemic modality)
- if so, is it weak or strong

## METHODOLOGY

- 1) corpus study in KORP by Giellatekno (56,72M tokens) - 50 sentences each
- 2) field recordings of spontaneous speech
- 3) Family Problems Picture Task (2 participants)
- 4) Evaluation with native speakers.

## CASE STUDIES

### DYR

14690 occurrences  
flexible, but mainly postverbal position

(3) jöratenak šynden otyl **dyr?**  
love.CVB.EMPH fall.PST2.CNG NEG.3SG **probably**  
,Have you not fallen in love after all?’

(4) teve kön **dyr** agytan muraltyš.  
look who.GEN **probably** rooster sing.PST1.3SG  
,Here’s whose rooster must have been singing.’

- encodes high (but not full) confidence in the truth value of the proposition
- to a degree, encodes inference
- also used in interrogative sentences (9 out of 50)

### DOKAN

5355 occurrences  
postverbal position

(5) izišak kanaltem dokan.  
a.bit.EMPH rest.1SG probably  
,I might take a rest.’

(6) protokolym vozyszyla Ignat’ev tidym umylen **dokan**.  
protocol.ACC write.PTC.SIM Ignat’ev this.ACC understand **probably**  
,While writing the protocol, Ignat’ev might have understood this.’

(7) kolyšt **dokan**  
listen.IMP.2SG **probably**  
,Just listen.’

- marks a lesser degree of confidence in the truth value of the proposition
- never used in interrogative mood
- also used as an emphatic particle

### VITNĚ

3295 occurrences  
preverbal and postverbal position

(8) Ijgot - žap dene mužyr ogył, **vitnie**.  
age time with couple NEG.be **apparently**  
,Looks like age does not align with time.’

(9) Pagarže, **vitnie**, tudyn šüšmö šuvyš gaj!  
stomach.PX3SG **apparently** (s)he.GEN loaded bag like  
,Looks like his/her stomach is like a loaded bag!’

- does not mark the degree of certainty in the truth value of the proposition
- directly linked to first-hand evidence of the speaker
- encodes inference drawn from said first-hand experience

### AMAN

2099 occurrences  
postverbal position only

(10) uremyšte tygaj motor keče a tyšte jür jüreš **aman?**  
street.ine such beautiful day but here rain fall.3SG **apparently**  
,There’s such a nice weather outside, and turns out it’s raining here?’

(11) tyjat erykym ot pu **aman**.  
you.too freedom.ACC NEG.2SG give.CNG **apparently**  
,Looks like you’re not leaving me alone.’

- out of 50 sentences, 14 are in interrogative mood
- mirative flavour
- also used in sentences that contradict the presupposition

### OČYŇI

12277 occurrences  
flexible position

(12)tudym šukertsek eryktyme ogył, **očyni**.  
that.ACCfor.a.long.time clean.PTC.PASS NEG.3SG **probably**  
,They have probably not cleaned it for a long time.’

(13)tide, **očyni**, šonen lukmaš, legenda.  
this **probably** think.CVB go.out.NMNLZlegend  
,This is probably fiction, a legend.’

- high confidence in the truth value of the proposition
- based on inference or first-hand experience

## CONCLUSION

- There are probably no particles in Meadow Mari that encode reportative evidentiality
- However, *vitnie* marks solely the first-hand experience of the speaker
- certain particles hold both inferential and epistemic value
- certain particles hold inferential but no epistemic value
- *aman* can be considered as a mirative particle

→ *evidentiality and epistemic modality can be viewed as separate domains*

→ *inferentiality and epistemic modality can be viewed as separate domains*.

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## CONTACT

Bogáta Timár, Eötvös Loránd University  
[timar.bogata@gmail.com](mailto:timar.bogata@gmail.com)  
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