The expression of epistemic modality in the Volga-Kama Sprachbund

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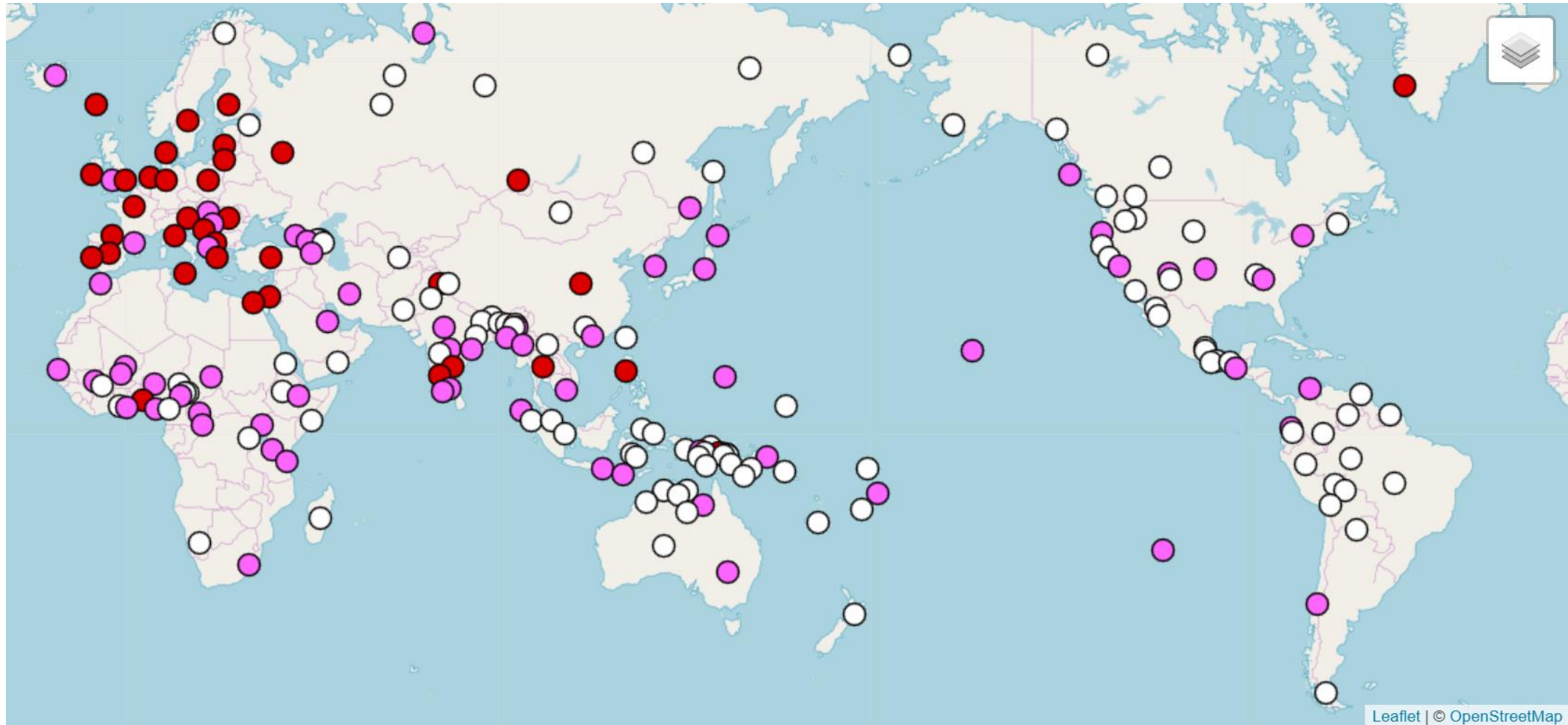# Situational vs epistemic modality

Epistemic modality:

„Epistemic modality indicates that the certainty or possibility of the information described is based on the speaker's personal opinion" (van der Auwera & Ammann 2013)

Situational modality:

„Situational modality indicates that an action can or need to take place according to internal or external factors, such as basic human needs or social conventions." (Nuyts 2016)

Overlap between situational and epistemic modal marking

Situational vs epistemic possibility

Hungarian:

Mása már   otthon   le-het

Maša already   at.home   be-POSS

'Maša is probably already at home.'

'Maša is already allowed to be home.'

→ **overlap**

Situational vs epistemic necessity

Hungarian

Másá-nak	*már*	*otthon*	*kell*	*le-nni-e*
Maša-DAT	already	home	must	be-INF-3SG

'Maša should already be home (according to my knowledge).'

'Maša should already be home (because she has to).'

→ overlap

Means to express modality

- **Modal suffixes**
  - *mə-lan-na   mӧŋgə-š kaj-**man***
  - we-DAT-1Pl home-ILL go-**PTCP.NEC**
  - 'We need to go home.'

- **Modal auxiliaries**
  - *Maša-lan   mal-**aš**   **kül-eš***
  - Maša-DAT   sleep-INF **need-3SG**
  - 'Maša has to sleep.'

- **Subordinate clauses**
  - *Avtobus-lan   oksa   o-k   site   **lij-ən**   **kert-eš***
  - Bus-DAT   money   neg-3SG suffice **be-CVB**   **be.able.to-3SG**
  - 'The money might not be enough for the bus.'

- **Lexical modifiers**
  - *Maša   eše   o-k   male   **dər***
  - Maša   yet   neg-3SG sleep   **maybe**
  - 'Maša might not be sleeping yet.'

Questions

- **How situational and epistemic modality are expressed** in the Volga-Kama Sprachbund?

- **Is there overlap** between situational and epistemic modal marking?

Meadow Mari

Neccessity

Maša uže   mal-šaš
Maša already   sleep-PTCP.FUT
'Maša must already be sleeping (because she has to).'
'Maša must already be sleeping (I think).'

Maša-lan   uže   mal-man.
Maša-DAT   already   sleep-INF.NEC
'Maša already needs to sleep.'

Maša-lan   uže   mal-aš   kül-eš.
Maša-DAT   already   sleep-INF   need-3SG
'Maša already has to sleep.'

Possibility

Maša uže   mal-eš,   lij-ən   kert-eš.
Maša   already   sleep-3SG   be-CVB be.able.to-3SG
'I may be that Maša is already sleeping.'

Maša uže   mal-eš   dər.
Maša   already   sleep-3SG   probably
'Probably Maša already is sleeping.'

Maša-lan   uže   mal-aš   lij-eš.
Maša-DAT   already   sleep-INF   be-3SG
'Maša can (is allowed to) sleep already.'

Conclusion

→ overlap in necessity (with modal suffix)

→ no overlap in possibility

Udmurt

Necessity

Maša-ļi   *iź- jņ̇*   *kul-e*   *ńi*

Maša-DAT   sleep-INF   must-3SG   already

'Maša has to bee sleeping already (because she was told to).'

'Maša has to be sleeping already (I think).'

Maša-ļi   *iź-ono*   *ńi.*

Maša-DAT   sleep-PTCP

'Maša needs to be sleeping already.'

Possibility

Maša   iź-e   ńi   dʲr.
Maša   sleep-3SG   already   probably
'Maša is probably sleeping.'

Bʲgat-e   lu-ʲnʲ,   Maša   iź-e   ńi.
can-3SG   be-INF   Maša   sleep-3SG   already
'It may be that Maša is already sleeping.'

Maša-lʲ   iź-ʲnʲ   jara.
Maša-DAT   sleep-INF   free
'Maša can sleep. (lit. Maša is free to sleep.)'

Maša   iź-ʲni   bʲgat-e
Maša   sleep-INF   can-3SG
'Maša can sleep.'

Conclusion

→ overlap in necessity (auxiliary construction)

udmurt *kule* ↔ mari *küleš*

→ no overlap in possibility

Erzya and Moksha

Necessity

Erzya

Maša-ńeń   eŕav-i   udo-ms.

Maša-DAT   must-3SG   sleep-INF

'Maša must be sleeping.' (both epistemic and situational)

Moksha

Maša-ťi   eŕav-i   udə-ms.

Maša-DET.GEN   must-3SG   aludni-INF

'Maša must sleep.' (situational only)

Possibility

Moksha

Uľama,   Maša ud-i.

probably   Maša sleep-3SG

Conclusion

- Necessity: in Erzya it (=auxiliary construction) overlaps, but in Moksha, the same construction does is not accepted to overlap
- Possibility: ?? (probably no overlap)

Chuvash

Necessity

Машă-н   çывăр-малла.

Maša-GEN   sleep-NEC

'Maša has to sleep.'

Маша   çывăр-ать пул-малла.

Maša   sleep-3SG   be-NEC

'Maša must be sleeping (I think).'

Tatar

Necessity

Маша   уяу   бул-ырга   тиеш.

Maša awake   be-INF   must

'Maša must be awake.'

'Maša must be awake (I assume).'

Маша-га   уяу   бул-ырга   кирэк.

she-DAT   awake   be-INF   must

'she must be awake. (She is obliged to.)'

Possibility

Маша,   мәгаен,   әле йокла-мый   торган-дыр

Maša   probably   now sleep-PTCP.NEG   ??-possibly

'Maša, I think, might be sleeping.'

тиеш in Eastern Mari

usage is completely complementary with *-šaš*

Maša uže	*mal-šaš*	
Maša already	sleep-PTCP.FUT	
=		
Maša uže	*mal-aš*	*tieš*
Maša already	sleep-INF	must
	mal-aš	*kül-eš*
	mal-aš	*lij-eš*

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Thank you!
Tay!
Tay!
Сюкпря!
Tay!
Рәхмәт!

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