

Another ‘look!’ (to the left and to the right): The Latvian particle *lūk* in parliamentary discourse

The Latvian particle *lūk* is derived from the imperative of the verb *lūkot* ‘try; look’. It is used in formal and informal varieties of spoken and written discourse as a presentative particle and marker of stance. In this paper I will analyze its use and functions as attested in the corpus SAEIMA, compiled from transcripts of sittings of the Latvian parliament. Prosodic features will be examined with selected examples from the recordings of the sittings. In SAEIMA, *lūk* is much more frequent than in the balanced corpus LVK2018 (298.2 vs. 59.92 occurrences per million). It is used for presenting, evaluating and stressing facts within an argumentation. A main goal of this paper is to establish in which way different functions are bound to different positions of the particle and whether *lūk* is developing a “right-margin” use.

Lūk is typically found within a longer turn of one speaker, rarely starting or closing a turn. As a presentative particle (cf. Petit 2010; Porhiel 2012) it may point ahead to the following stretch of speech (like French *voici*), or backwards to what has been stated before (like French *voilà*). In the first case its position is either at the left margin of a clause or non-clausal unit (1), or parenthetically within a clause (2). When pointing backwards, the particle most often forms an intonation unit of its own (3), but may also occur at the beginning of a clause.

- (1) *Lūk*, *piemērs*:
PTC example.NOM.SG ‘Here is an example.’
- (2) *Es gribētu, lūk, ko.*
1SG.NOM want.IRR PTC what.ACC ‘Here is what I would like.’
- (3) *Ja jūs maldāties, man nav jāpiekrīt jums. Lūk!*
‘If you are wrong, I don’t have to agree with you. LŪK!’ (‘That’s how it is!’)

Another function of the particle is within represented speech, mostly with a negative stance towards the presented statement. In this function its position is at the beginning of a clause (4) or as parenthesis.

- (4) *Tāpat šajā rakstā viņš teica, ka, lūk, Latvijas krievi ir tie labākie krievi*
‘He also says in this paper that LŪK Latvia’s Russians are the better Russians’

Lūk seems to be always speaker-oriented. Where it occurs, speakers are not seeking agreement nor invite a response. Maybe the lack of such intersubjective meanings prevents *lūk* to fuse with the previous utterance and become an element of the right margin, or acquire a turn-yielding function.

This paper will contribute to the cross-linguistic study of functions of pragmatic markers in different positions (Traugott 2012; Beeching & Detges, eds. 2014) and to that of particles originating in forms of perception verbs (Fagard 2010; Aijmer & Elgemark 2013). To my knowledge, the Latvian data have not been described before (but see Chojnicka 2012 for other markers of stance in Latvian parliament discourse).

References

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