

NON-INTERACTIONAL USES OF THE DISCOURSE PARTICLE *NU* (~ *NO*) IN SOUTHERN SELKUP TRADITIONAL NARRATIVES

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Abstract: The discourse particle *nu* and its variants are widespread among the European languages and have been relatively well studied on the basis of the conversational data. This paper investigates the use of *nu* outside the conversational data in the genre of traditional storytelling and focuses on non-interactional uses of *nu* in Southern Selkup varieties. The results show that the particle *nu* is found in two environments in traditional storytelling: constructed dialogues presenting speech and thoughts of the characters, and the main narrative line. In the main narrative line, *nu* frequently occurs on the boundaries of episodes and can be associated either with signaling the beginning or the end of the episode. Similar uses of the particle *nu* are also found in narratives from other languages, where this particle is either an autochthonous or borrowed element. Functional counterparts of discourse-segmenting *nu* can be found in languages where *nu* is present as a borrowed element but fulfills other functions.

Keywords: discourse structure, discourse markers, narrative discourse

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.12697/jeful.2026.17.1.02>

1. Introduction

The discourse particle *nu* (and its variants) is widespread among the languages of Europe (Auer & Maschler 2016a, 2016b). It occurs in both Indo-European and non-Indo-European languages, although it has an Indo-European origin (Auer & Maschler 2016b). Its occurrence in non-Indo-European languages like Estonian or Hebrew is explained as a result of language contact (Auer & Maschler 2016b); hence, *nu* can be considered overall borrowable (see Matras 2009).

Using predominantly conversational data, previous studies have yielded observations regarding the functional capacities of *nu* in

interaction. Auer & Maschler (2016b) highlight common functions found across many European languages, as well as some apparently independently developed uses. Among the commonly attested functions, the following can be mentioned: (i) prompting in the initiative position, (ii) the urging/prompting ('go-ahead') function in the responsive position, and (iii) marking an utterance as sequentially or topically projected and hence a consequence of preceding talk (Auer & Maschler 2016b). Furthermore, the use of the marker can start responses produced with surprise or those that can be identified as not quite preferred¹ (Auer & Maschler 2016b). On the periphery, we find the uses of *nu* as the marker of emphatic reinforcement (cf. Keevallik 2016 on Estonian), or as a marker of contrast or mitigation (cf. Hakulinen 2016 on Finnish *ny(t)*).²

The use of *nu* outside the conversational data has not been studied extensively. For a researcher working with endangered minority languages, it is problematic because conversational data are largely absent for many such languages (or their amount and quality are too low to account for tendencies). Hence, it becomes hard to map functions already identified for the marker in conversation on the uses of *nu* outside such material, even though the use of discourse particles (in particular, *nu*) in other genres like traditional storytelling or written prose is relatively frequent to be of interest for detailed scrutiny (see Zubova et al. 2023).³ Methodologically, it is a useful endeavor to explore the capacities of traditional narratives as a data source, which may advance cross-linguistic investigations comparing several (Uralic) languages in the future. It is a genre quite well documented for many minority languages within the Uralic language family (see e.g. INEL corpora, and numerous earlier published text collections) and beyond (see e.g.

1 Bolden (2016: 56) characterizes such responses as those that "alert the recipient that what is to come is not an unproblematic, expected, or appropriate next."

2 Finnish *ny(t)* is not a cognate of *nu*, which is found in Indo-European languages of Europe and has been borrowed into some non-Indo-European languages like Estonian or Hebrew.

3 The functions of *nu* in written prose were investigated for the Polish discourse particle *no*, sharing some observations on its cohesive intra-textual functions (Sawicki 2016: 99). However, this study also focuses on the use of *nu* in constructed dialogues (see fn. 7), which allude to natural conversational data. Other studies specifically focusing on the use of *nu* in the setting where the narrator tells the story to the audience, or where it occurs in the stream of written prose outside constructed dialogues are not familiar to me.

the SpeechReporting corpora, Nikitina et al. 2022; DoReCo database, Seifart et al. 2024).

This study investigates the uses of *nu* outside conversations and approaches the discourse particle *nu* in Selkup traditional storytelling.⁴ Selkup, as many Uralic languages, possesses an inventory of autochthonous focus (e.g. *æmtæ* ‘even’, *olæ* ‘merely’), modal (*ken* ‘indeed’), and evidential (*monti* ‘it is seen’, *mompa* ‘they say’) particles (Kazakevič 2022: 805). In text collections, we also find replications of Russian particles, among which the discourse particle *nu* can be encountered, cf. (1), with a variant *no*, cf. (2).⁵ No apparent differences between the variants *nu* and *no* can be pointed out besides the individual preference of the speakers to use consistently one variant or another, and that *no* is also used as an adversative conjunction (as in the matrix language). The adversative uses of *no* will not be discussed henceforth, and for convenience, I will refer to both variants as *nu* within the text.

(1) Southern Selkup (Chaya)

A los t'äri-ŋ: “Nu tan so:c'ka
and devil(.NOM) say-3SG.S PTCL 2SG(.NOM) good
kiban'aža-qi-nt, täi kiba aur-ga-nt. (...)”
child-DIM-2SG.S mind(.NOM) small boy-DIM-2SG.S
‘And the devil said, “**Well**, you’re a good boy, a smart boy.”’
(PMP_1966_BoyDevil_flk.099)

(2) Southern Selkup (Middle Ob)

No n'en'a-t č'a:žə i siband'a
PTCL sister-3SG.POSS run(.3SG.S) and pig(.NOM)
kur-al'-i-špa.
run-MOM-E-IPFV(.3SG.S)
‘**Well**, the sister went on and the pig ran.’ (SEV_1967_SisterAnd-BrotherPiglet_flk.029)

4 On the genres of Selkup folklore, see e.g. Tučková (2018).

5 The use of *no* as a discourse particle, functionally equivalent to *nu*, is unfamiliar, at least, in Standard Russian (cf. MAS online, <https://lexicography.online/explanatory/mas>). It is apparent, however, that some Selkup speakers do not distinguish the two elements and use *no* as both an adversative conjunction (as in Standard Russian) and a discourse particle equivalent to *nu* in Standard Russian.

Most occurrences of *nu* in the INEL Selkup Corpus (Brykina et al. 2021) appear in Southern Selkup varieties.⁶ The examples include situations in which *nu* is not accompanied by other discourse markers and in combinations of the particle with other units (see fn. 8 and Table 2 in Section 3).

Two major environments can be identified in the Selkup data: *nu* occurs in constructed dialogues between the characters (or when self-addressed as constructed thoughts)⁷, as in (1), and when it starts a line within a narrative, as in (2), and is used non-interactionally. By non-interactive use, I mean the unidirectional verbal exchange in which one speaker holds a turn during which a coherent narrative is being told (ideally from the beginning till the end without major interference by the audience). The primary focus of this paper is on non-interactive uses of *nu*, although I also briefly describe interactive uses. The main aim is to provide a better description of the use of *nu* outside conversations (constructed or real ones) within one language, with a broader goal stretching beyond this paper to extend the investigation to other languages in the family and beyond (see Section 5).

Although previous accounts indicate that the particle *nu* can be used as a cohesive intra-textual device that marks the utterance as sequentially or topically projected (i.e., as a consequence of previous talk), such an explanation of non-interactive uses of *nu* becomes less helpful when a material like a folktale is approached. First, we find that in this genre, events are mostly presented sequentially by default, and causal links between the main events in the story emerge without the narrator's additional highlighting of such cohesion. Second, it is well-known that discourse can be organized cohesively even without the use

6 *Nu* is surprisingly absent in the data from other dialects. Outside the Southern Selkup material, it occurs twice in the corpora in two narratives produced by a speaker of the Northern (Taz) dialect, which will not be covered in this paper. One occurrence of *nu* is found in code-switching into Russian; the other licenses *nu* as part of the complex discourse marker with permissive semantics, *nu latno* 'well, alright/okay' (< Ru. *nu ladno* 'id.'). I discuss permissive uses of *nu* in Southern Selkup in Section 3.1.

7 I use the label 'constructed dialogue', coined by Tannen (1986), to refer to what is otherwise more broadly known as 'reported/represented speech (and thought)' (e.g. Spronck & Nikitina 2019, Vandelanotte 2022, i.a.) or 'reported discourse' (Güldemann 2008). Henceforth, the label will subsume both voiced/external and voiceless/inner speech.

of discourse markers (see e.g. Das & Taboada 2018, i.a.).⁸ Third, discourse markers and other cohesive devices are known to be sensitive to discourse units larger than clauses (see e.g. Brinton 1993; Bakker 1993). Thus, their functions may lie outside the mere linking of discourse units as a presentation of causally motivated events. By exploring Selkup data, I will challenge the above observation that *nu* shall be regarded as a marker highlighting the events in the narrative as sequentially or topically projected and will check whether its use instead can be associated with extra-segmental textural function, indicating the boundaries of (sub)episodes or scenes.⁹

This paper is structured as follows. Section 2 presents data and methods. Section 3 focuses on results, first providing a short description of interactional uses found in constructed dialogues (§3.1), and then turning to textural uses of *nu* (§3.2). Results are summarized in Section 4. Section 5 presents a discussion, and Section 6 concludes the paper.

2. Data and method

The data used in this paper are derived from the INEL Selkup Corpus (Brykina et al. 2021). The analysis was organized as follows. First, I have queried the elements *nu* and *no* with the search engine available for the corpus. Second, after all relevant uses were documented, the narratives in which the elements *nu* and *no* were used as discourse particles were additionally investigated as a whole,¹⁰ allowing the inclusion of a more significant number of examples than those found with the query through the search engine. All occurrences of *nu* and elements that in the Russian translation acquired translation ‘hy’ were listed. Altogether, 196 examples were collected from 19 tales produced

8 There are narratives that exhibit quite a minor use of discourse markers in my material. See the Appendix for more details on the number of occurrences of *nu* per narrative.

9 I borrow the label ‘textural’ from McGregor’s (1997) *Semiotic Grammar*, where it is used to refer to the domain embodied in the grammar of all human languages concerned with relating the utterance to its context (McGregor 1997: 75). I use this label rather broadly here and include all text-forming (but also text-formatting) functions.

10 The corpus allows such an option and provides translations into Russian and German in addition to English.

by 7 speakers. As mentioned in Section 1, the data analyzed only reflect southern varieties of Selkup, represented by three subdialects: Chaya, Ket, and Middle Ob.¹¹ Third, the listed examples were annotated in the MS Excel table.

The annotations included metadata (link to the whole narrative, speaker ID, dialect, tale, example ID), the position of the example with *nu* (and variants) in the narrative, and in the episode structure. The position in the narrative structure was annotated according to Labov (1972). The Labovian narrative structure consists of six thematic parts (Labov 1972: 363), presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Narrative structure according to Labov (1972: 363).

Narrative part	Main theme
1. Abstract	What is the story?
2. Orientation	Who, what, when & where?
3. Complicating action	Then what happened?
4. Evaluation	So what?
5. Result or resolution	What did it end with?
6. Coda	What is the moral?

The linear order in which the narrative parts are presented in Table 1 is typically maintained, but not all narrative parts are equally present in the coherent narrative. For instance, Abstract, Coda, and Evaluation can be omitted, and in Selkup data, this is often the case. Evaluation does not necessarily occupy any particular place in the narrative, and the evaluative comments launched by the narrator regarding characters or events (often embedded in constructed dialogues and attributed to the characters to create distancing) may appear within different parts of the narrative.

The position of the example in the episode, i.e. a unit smaller than a narrative part, was also annotated, using the criteria for the thematic unity outlined in van Dijk (1981). The change of episodes in the narrative typically corresponds to a change in time, location, participants, action sequence, or perspective and is often signaled by discourse markers, spatial and temporal adverbs, explicit meta-comments, etc.

11 Most examples come from one speaker representing the Chaya subdialect (see Appendix); however, no special idiolectal features were noted in the course of the analysis.

(Brinton 1993: 74–75). Since the narrative is almost universally formed by Complicating Action in my material, such an additional annotation allows a better understanding of whether the discourse particle is attracted to a particular place within a discourse unit larger than a clause and allows us to check for the correlation between its position and additional functions deriving from a particular placement. This annotation included three primary parameters: beginning, middle, and end of the episode. Roughly, any change in time, location, participants, or action sequence corresponds to the beginning of the new episode; a change in perspective does not necessarily signal the change of the episode and may acquire additional rhetorical functions (cf. Larson 1978, Noonan 2006).¹² Since the narratives presented in the corpora are not rehearsed but rather spontaneous narrations by non-professional storytellers, often the end of the episode can stretch over several turns. For a few such cases, additional labels were used specifying whether an example occurs at the very end of the episode (annotation ‘very end’) or has a turn following it (annotation ‘pre-end’).

Examples in which *nu* occurs in the constructed dialogue were additionally annotated, thus allowing us to look at interactional uses separately from non-interactional. After the main annotations were organized, an additional column was added, suggesting a tentative function of the marker. Annotated data can be found on the Open Science Framework in a table organized in MS Excel under the following link: <https://osf.io/2s7tc> (25 May 2025).¹³

Examples in the paper are presented almost exactly as they occur in the corpora. I only modify the translations and add ‘well’ (corresponding to *nu* in the example line) where no overt discourse marker is present in the original source, or where some other discourse marker is used instead. I acknowledge that such a strategy may result in a less successful translation in certain environments and use ‘well’ merely for convenience as an arguably closest counterpart of *nu* in English.

12 Evaluations are sometimes presented through the speech and thought attributed to the characters (see e.g. Obrtelová 2017).

13 For now, the annotations exclude the column for function, which will be added after the analysis is finalized.

3. *Nu* in Selkup folktales

As was briefly mentioned in §1, the marker *nu* appears either as a “self-standing” unit or in combination with other discourse markers: autochthonous elements like the interrogative pronoun *qaj* ‘what’ and the locative adverbial *nind* ‘there’, or those replicated from Russian: *täper* (< Ru. *teper* ‘now’), illocutionary markers *dawaj* and *puskaj*, the discourse particle *wot* ‘right here’, and the discourse marker *i* and *a*¹⁴ (see Table 2). Furthermore, there is the autochthonous element *t’äpus*, which is translated in the tales with Ru. ‘hy’. Since this element occurs only thrice in one narrative, its function will not be discussed henceforth; I also abstain from the comparison between *t’äpus* and *nu*. Table 2 lists all variants found in the tales and presents the number of occurrences for each marker; the lengthening and other phonetic characteristics of the marker are disregarded for now and are not separately mentioned in the table and henceforth in the paper.

Table 2. *Nu* and its translation counterparts in Southern Selkup traditional narratives (based on the data from INEL Selkup corpus).

Marker	Number of occurrences	Percentage
<i>nu i</i> [PTCL]	98	50%
<i>nu</i>	49	25%
<i>no</i>	27	13,77%
<i>no i</i> [PTCL]	8	4,08%
<i>(a) nu täper</i> (~ <i>täpäp</i>) [‘(PTCL) ... now’]	3	1,53%
<i>nu a</i> [PTCL]	2	1,02%
<i>no (a) qaj</i> [‘(PTCL) what’]	2	1,02%
<i>nu dawaj</i> [PTCL.HORT]	1	0,51%
<i>nu puskaj</i> [PTCL.OPT]	1	0,51%
<i>no nind</i> [‘then’]	1	0,51%
<i>nu wot i</i> [‘right.here PTCL’]	1	0,51%
<i>t’äpus</i>	3	1,53%
Total	196	100%

14 Both markers are usually translated as ‘and’. The marker *i* is a coordinating conjunction that can also function as a discourse marker initiating new conversation turns, while *a* shall be viewed as a contrastive topic marker (cf. Uryson 2004). An anonymous reviewer suggests that the marker *a* can also function as a contrastive focus marker. All these discourse functions of the markers *i* and *a* remain neutralized when they are glossed as ‘and’ and consequently force their interpretation in the examples as conjunctions. To avoid this confusion, I label them as ‘discourse markers’ and gloss them as PTCL.

Henceforth, the combination of *nu* with other elements will be viewed parallel to “self-standing” *nu*, in which it is the only discourse particle in the clause. However, no implications will be aprioristically made regarding the functional correspondence between the “self-standing” *nu* and *nu* in combination with other elements.

Regarding the position of the examples with *nu* in the narrative structure, we observe the situation suggested in Section 2. Namely, most examples occur during Complicating Action, which describes the main development of the events in the story and universally forms a larger part of the narrative. The marker, however, may occur in all remaining parts of the narrative, excluding Abstract. Table 3 summarizes the position of *nu* in the narrative parts.

Table 3. *Nu* across narrative parts of Selkup folktales.

Narrative part	Number of occurrences	Percentage
1. Abstract	0	0%
2. Orientation	15	7,77%
3. Complicating action	167	86,52%
4. Evaluation	5	2,59%
5. Result or resolution	5	2,59%
6. Coda	1	0,51%
Total	193	100%

Since its more frequent occurrence in Complicating action could be expected from the overall structure of every folktale, henceforth I will focus on the position of the marker in episodes forming the narrative part.

As briefly mentioned above, *nu* occurs in two major environments: in constructed dialogues and within the main narrative line. I discuss the two uses separately. Even though the focus is on non-interactional uses, the occurrence of *nu* in constructed dialogues is first presented in §3.1, after which non-interactional uses of *nu* are covered in §3.2.

3.1. *Nu* in constructed dialogues

In Selkup data, *nu* occurs in constructed dialogues on 58 occasions out of 193 examples (excluding 3 occurrences of *t’ägu*s, see above). Most instances (54 exx., 93,10%) represent speech attributed to the characters, which is organized in a dialogic bi-directional exchange

between the characters; on 4 occasions, the characters' thoughts are represented, which can be viewed as self-directed external or silent inner speech. In most examples, *nu* occurs at the beginning of the turn in the first constructed dialogue clause, and only on 7 occasions, *nu* appears further in the character's turn. While many uses of *nu* in constructed dialogues can be considered interactional, the examples where *nu* appears further in the character's turn share several characteristics with its non-interactional uses covered in more detail in §3.2. Non-interactional uses of *nu* are also observed in those constructed turns which typically occur towards the beginning or the end of the sub-episode. I will separately stop on both cases toward the end of this subsection.

Among interactional uses, different types of illocutionary modification can be observed, usually when *nu* appears with directive speech acts. 29 cases (50%) are observed in the data. Most such cases (19 cases, 65,51%) represent a prompt to action, which semantically coincides with the imperative (3) and optative (4) marking on the verb, with no apparent difference in the meaning when compared with a *nu*-less directive speech acts.

- (3) ('The robber says: "We will kill him outside.")
Nu *waza-k*, *ča:ʒi-k* *ponä*
 PTCL stand.up-IMP.2SG.S go-IMP.2SG.S outwards
 'Well, get up, go outside...' (PVD_1964_UnfaithfulWifeAndRobbers.187)
- (4) "*Nu*, *man* *tast* *o:ti:-la-k-s...*"
 PTCL 1SG 2SG.ACC hide-OPT-1SG-OPT
 "'Well, I shall hide you.'" (PMP_1961_Fairytale_flk.197).

Another less pronounced tendency for directive speech acts with *nu* is that they can occur in out-of-the-blue contexts. For instance, *nu* in (5) occurs in the constructed dialogue that starts a new episode in the narrative. The interlocutors to whom the command is launched were previously introduced, but the reason for such a prompt cannot be recovered in the preceding context. Such cases are, however, scarce in the data to provide an explanation for the differences between directive speech acts with and without *nu*.

- (5) *Täpp-e-ni kuwan-ni no qallo*
 3SG-E-ALL go-CO(.3SG) PTCL QUOT
täqa-la-lat sila-mba-t!
 spear-PL-2PL.POSS sharpen-DUR-IMP.2SG.O
 ‘He came to them: **well**, sharpen your spears!’ (SVG_1964_ItjeFather-FishMotherFish_flk.028)

In the responsive turns formed by directive speech acts, *nu* starts a permissive clause, as in (6) (cf. ‘go-ahead’ functions in Auer & Maschler 2016b: 18). In contrast to the above prompts with *nu*, the permissive reading is rather straightforward for directive speech acts in responsive turns. *Nu* occurs in 8 such examples, once co-occurring with the discourse marker *i*, and once with the Russian hortative marker *puskaj*.¹⁵

- (6) (“Take me across, then I will tell you.”)
 “*Nu mendi-k.*”
 PTCL pass-IMP.2SG.S
 “**Well**, cross.” (PMP_1961_Fairytale_flk.136)

A hedging function of *nu*, where it is used to mitigate the force of an utterance in discourse with directive clauses, is not observed in the prompting function illustrated in (3). Apparently, however, *nu* can function as a hedge-like element in constructions with directive speech acts expressing permission.¹⁶ A hedging function can also be observed when *nu* starts a response containing disagreement with the interlocutor’s previous utterance, illustrated in (7). Only two such examples occur in the data within the same narrative.

- (7) (‘The old woman said: “And then you will say: What skinny legs the old woman had.”)
 “*Nu al’d’iga, tan tob-o-l nidi-ŋ az je-ya-n...*”
 PTCL aunt 2SG leg-E-2SG.POSS such-ADV NEG be-CO-3SG.S
 “**Well**, auntie, your legs are not like that.” (PMP_1961_ForestWoman_flk.201).

15 In Russian, the hortative particle *puskaj* (as well as the variant *pust’*) can be used with permissive meaning (cf. Dobrušina 2019).

16 This function of *nu* could be separately checked in the future in the conversational data in the INEL Selkup corpus.

The last function of *nu* among the previously attested in conversations is signaling the beginning of a “not quite the preferred response” (cf. Auer & Maschler 2016b: 25–27). Four such examples are attested in the data. In such cases, *nu* starts a responsive turn containing an utterance that shall be taken interactionally as not the best possible option in the circumstances. Such can be a forced agreement to the action, as in (8), where the character is tricked by the devil to promise something about which he does not know (own child) to spare his own life.

- (8) (‘The devil, who held him, said: “I will let you go. What don’t you know at home? Promise me!” The man thought, thought. “I know everything at home.”)
Nu, t’äpti-l’e-w-s!’
 PTCL promise-OPT-1SG.O-OPT
 ‘Well, I promise.’” (PMP_1966_BoyDevil_flk.023)

Another such example in (9) illustrates the utterance produced by the tsar who unexpectedly gets a refusal from his daughter’s savior upon the tsar’s suggestion to reward the savior. As a compromise, the tsar offers the savior money; the turn starts with *nu*.

- (9) (‘The father said: “Now take her. I’ll give you everything.” And the soldier said: “I don’t need anything.”’)
“Nu, man tekga qomdä me-ni-ža-n.”
 PTCL 1SG 2SG.ALL money do-INFER-FUT-1SG.S
 “Well, I’ll give you money.” (PVD_1964_SoldierMadeAWomanAlive_flk.029)

As mentioned above, in addition to interactional uses, peculiar to conversations outside constructed dialogues, *nu* can also be used with the segmenting function. What is characteristic of such examples is that they all occur at the end of the constructed dialogue segment, which often coincides with the end of the (sub)episode and movement to the next one. For instance, the conversation between the main character Itja and Itja’s grandmother in (10) ends with Itja’s announcement of his intention to go search for other people. The next episode starts with what is announced in the constructed dialogue.

- (10) ('He knocked her over. "Itja, grandson, I know. There down on the cold upper cape are your seven sisters-Pachiyangne, apparently."')

No tita qwan-ža-ŋ täp-la-nni.

PTCL now leave-FUT-1SG.S 3SG-PL-ALL

Qwan-ni, ni:t'ä tti:-ya-n.

leave-CO(.3SG) here come-CO-3SG.S

'“Well, I will go to them.” He went away, came there.’ (SVG_1964_Itje-FatherFishMotherFish_flk.048-049)

Obviously, examples in which the constructed turn with *nu* closes the constructed dialogue segment are not functionally restricted to the segmenting function and may be motivated by their primary interactional or rhetorical functions. For instance, (10) above contains overtones of self-prompt and is used rhetorically to highlight the event in the next episode (see Larson 1978 on rhetorical functions of reported speech in traditional storytelling; Teptiuk & Spronck 2022, Teptiuk 2025 on accounts from Selkup and Nganasan, respectively). Nonetheless, 25 examples (43,1%) in the data show a preference for this position and occur in turns with constructed dialogue, closing the scene.

Among such 25 examples, the mere segmental function can nonetheless be observed, where the turn with *nu* appears within the longer stretch of the constructed dialogue sequence, attributed to one speaker. In Selkup folktales, such occurrences happen when the protagonist recaps the main events to another character from their own perspective. Such events are already known to the audience from a description thereof in the preceding narrative parts. In (11), the episode occurring in such a recap is closed with the turn started by *nu i*. Even though the recap in this tale contains several smaller episodes, only on three occasions is the scene closed with a *nu*-initial turn (all in the collocation with the discourse marker *i*). To save space, I present the preceding context in the translation only.

- (11) ('His aunt said: "Why were you gone for so long?" "I was gone for so long because I set the nets at the lower end of the lake and I thought myself: "Why didn't you let me go to the lower end of the lake?"')

Nu i kige-l-a-ŋ qwan-ŋu.

PTCL PTCL want-INCH-CO-1SG.S go-INF

Qwan-na-ŋ, pong-la-m pon-na-u.

go-CO-1SG.S net-PL-ACC place.net-CO-1SG.O

'Well, I decided to go there. I went and set the nets.' (PMP_1967_About-Itja_flk.071)

The segmental function can be observed when, in such recaps, the *nu*-initial turn opens the new episode, as in (12).¹⁷

- (12) (‘...And I told them: “Stopper all the holes, and leave one hole [open].” They said to me: “It’s not your business. Go where you were heading to.”’)

<i>Nu</i>	<i>i</i>	<i>man</i>	<i>üba-η.</i>
PTCL	PTCL	1SG	set.off-1SG.S
<i>Ča:žī-sa-η,</i>	<i>ča:žī-sa-η,</i>	<i>me:da-η</i>	<i>soj-o-nt.</i>
go-PST-1SG	go-PST-1SG	reach-1SG	source-E-ILL

‘Well, I left. I went on and on, I reached a source.’ (PMP_1961_Three-BrothersAndPriest_flk.373)

Thus, segmenting *nu*-initial turns in constructed dialogues can be associated with the boundary of the episode, either the closing or the initial. The episode-closing function is somewhat more prevalent than the episode-opening in the data illustrating constructed dialogues, but as I show in the following subsection, the situation is reverse outside constructed dialogues.

3.2. Non-interactional uses of *nu*

Outside constructed dialogues, *nu* occurs more frequently in the data, comprising 134 examples. Most of the examples illustrating non-interactional uses correspond to the uses illustrated in the previous subsection in (11) and (12) and can be associated with the segmenting function of the narrative.

As mentioned in the previous subsection, the occurrence of *nu*-initial turns is more prevalent during the opening of the new episode/scene and counts 86 examples (64,17%) in the data. The collocation of *nu* with the discourse marker *i* is the most frequent, counting 63 examples; bare uses occur in 20 examples, while the remainder comprises two collocations with the discourse marker *a* and one collocation with the autochthonous temporal adverbial *nind* ‘then.’ The turn with *nu* (in collocation or self-standing) either starts a new development in the tale or indicates a subtle

17 Such uses can be superficially compared to *nu* in conversational Russian, where the particle is used at the beginning of a new (sub)topic or signals the new development within the same thematic unit (see Kuosmanen & Multisilta 1999: 57–58).

change within a larger episode, usually associated with a change in the prevailing action. Furthermore, there are also cases in which *nu* starts a turn, which helps the narrator to fast-forward the events in the narrative. Let us stop on these three uses separately.

The new development in the tale, initiated with *nu*, is illustrated in (13). In the tale from which the excerpt is presented, the protagonist is sent by the tsar to the dragon to ask how much gold the tsar has. On the way to the dragon, the protagonist encounters a boatman. Since the protagonist is bound to cross the lake, he starts a conversation with a boatman, and the boatman, in turn, gives the protagonist a task to learn how long he shall serve as a boatman.¹⁸ The narrative events are interrupted by the explanation that the boatman is doomed to help people cross the lake and cannot leave the boat.¹⁹ After that, a new episode starts with a *nu*-initial turn. The function of *nu*, suggested by its position in the episode structure, can be interpreted as indicating the beginning of a new episode in the tale but also signaling a return to the main narrative line.

- (13) *Nu i kiba tibe-qum-ga qwan-ni-ŋ Ča:ži-s,*
 PTCL PTCL little man-human-DIM leave-CO-1SG.S go-PST(.3SG)
ča:ži-s. Medi-ŋ tibe-qum-ga i:pkaj qwaj.
 go-PST(.3SG) reach-3SG.S man-human-DIM big big.river
 ‘Well, the boy left. He went, went. He reaches a big river.’ (PMP_1961_Fairytale_flk.129–131)

Quite frequently, the new episode starts after the constructed dialogue. In such situations, we can again observe the condition during which the *nu*-initial turn starts a new development but also indicates a return to the main narrative line, interrupted this time not by an additional explanation as in (13) but by a sequence containing constructed dialogue. For instance, in (14), the constructed dialogue part ends with a

18 ‘Paddling the boat, the man paddles to the boy, takes him across the lake. The man says to the boy: “Where are you going?” “I am going to the three-headed dragon. (...) The rich man sent me to learn about how much gold he has.” “You ask the dragon for me, when god would let me leave this boat.”’ (PMP_1961_Fairytale_flk.112–118)

19 ‘This man takes the people across the lake. (...) A newly moved person who has sat down leaves, a new man arrives. (...) And this man, who takes the people across, who goes in the boat, the boat takes him to the middle of the lake. This person is suffering all the time. (...) He can’t get off.’ (PMP_1961_Fairytale_flk.119–128)

priest giving instructions to one of the protagonists (the middle brother) to herd the horses but also to eat the loaf of bread, after which the tale is continued with an attempt by the protagonist to fulfill the task.

- (14) ('The priest gave him a big loaf of bread. "Eat this bread. If you don't eat it, I won't pay you."')

Nu i kündi-la-ze qwan-ni-ŋ

PTCL PTCL horse-PL-COM leave-CO-3SG.S

'Well, he [= the middle brother] left with the horses.' (PMP_1961_Three-BrothersAndPriest_flk.117)

A *nu*-initial turn followed by the constructed dialogue can also be interpreted as presenting a result of the conversation (or inner dialogue) in the constructed dialogue. The change between episodes is less apparent due to the stronger semantic unity between the parts presented in the constructed dialogue and the following main storyline but can still be associated with the change in the prevailing action, e.g., from an instruction to an attempt to accomplish the instruction, as in (15).

- (15) ('The husband scolds his wife: "Go and buy the boy a second time." He gives her money again. "Buy and bring him to me. Do not give him to anyone! I will kill him myself."')

Nu i paja-t qwan-ni-ŋ tau-gu

PTCL PTCL wife-3SG.POSS leave-CO-3SG.S buy-INF

tibe-qum-ga-n sidi-mžel.

man-human-DIM-ACC two-ITER

'Well, the woman leaves to buy the boy a second time.' (PMP_1961_Fairytale_flk.085)

In addition to the uses described above, *nu* can also start the turn that can be interpreted as a paragraph break that fast-forwards events in the tale. Consider (16) illustrating such a use in the Orientation of the story.

- (16) ('There lived an old man and an old woman. He had three daughters and one son.')

No kušak tab-la warki-za-k, paja-t

PTCL how.many 3SG-PL live-PST-3DU.S old.woman-3SG.POSS

qu:-mba.

die-PST.NAR(.3SG.S)

'Well, they lived for some time, the old woman died.' (SEV_1967_SisterAndBrotherPiglet_flk.003)

Such occurrences can also happen later in the narrative and start a turn that precedes the development described therein. In (17), the turn with *nu* is preceded by the instructions given to the protagonist, while the *nu*-initial turn preliminarily announces that the protagonist followed these instructions, although this development is realized only later in the tale.

- (17) (“Now go! Hurry up! He (the dragon) is not home. He has a beautiful wife, she is a beautiful woman. You have to beg. (...) She will hide you somewhere.”)

Nu i kiba tibe-qum-ga n'ild'i-n i mi:-o-t.
 PTCL PTCL little man-human-DIM such-ADV and do-CO-3SG.O
 ‘Well, the boy did it so. (He went, went. He comes to the dragon’s wife.)’
 (PMP_1961_Fairytale_flk.175)

By contrast with the episode-opening *nu*, in 41 examples (30,59%) *nu* appears in turns closing the (sub)episode or those that signal the movement toward such a closure (see Section 2). Similarly to the above uses at the beginning of the episode, most examples contain the collocation with the discourse marker *i* (30 examples), with bare uses being less frequent (11 examples). (18) illustrates the use of *nu* in the episode-closing turn; the next turn starts a new development in the tale.

- (18) (‘She began to beat the head. The head began to cry. “Oh, my head.”’)

Nu nă-j-yum tab-i-m nild'z'arediŋ qwan-ni-t.
 PTCL woman-ADJ-human 3SG-E-ACC so kill-CO-3SG.O
 ‘Well, the woman killed it like that. (She began to live in that house by herself.)’ (PMP_1966_BodylessHead_flk.104)

In one example, such an episode-closing *nu* occurs at the very end of the tale in the Coda, illustrated in (20).²⁰

- (20) *Nu i t'äptä malče-di-ŋ.*

PTCL PTCL tale end-REF-3SG.S

‘Well, the tale is over.’ (PMP_1967_AboutItja_flk.108)

20 Such closures are also typical for Russian: *nu i skazočke konec* ‘well and the tale has ended’ (lit. ‘well and [here’s] the ending to the tale’). See Kuosmanen & Multisilta (1999) for a discussion of similar uses (‘Ending an episode or topic’) in Russian conversations.

The remainder of the examples occur in the *nu*-initial turns that are placed within the narrative structure. Two types of environments can be observed: (i) the turn is formed by Evaluation and provides the narrator's additional commentary, (ii) the turn contains constructed dialogue, but *nu* occurs in the clause setting off the constructed dialogue.

The evaluation started by *nu* occurs in two examples in the data. In both examples occurring within the same tale, the narrator presents an additional explanation for the previously described events. For instance, in (21), such an explanation occurs within a longer stretch of Evaluation, specifying the character's motivation. The turn with *nu* can be regarded as a parenthetical expression, adding more clarity to the previously presented explanation that the father's deed was intentional.²¹

- (21) ('The father did not forget the grinder. He left the grinder intentionally. He wouldn't leave [it otherwise].')
- | | | | | | |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| <i>Nu</i> | <i>kiban</i> | <i>'aza-m</i> | <i>a:li-ŋ-gu</i> | <i>kundar-ta</i> | <i>keregeŋ,</i> |
| PTCL | child-ACC | | deceive-DRV-INF | how-INDEF | one.should |
| <i>ü:t-ku</i> | <i>am-gu.</i> | | | | |
| send-INF | eat-INF | | | | |
- 'Well, the child must somehow be deceived, sent to be devoured. (That's why he sent him.)' (PMP_1966_BoyDevil_flk.059)

The *nu*-initial turn in the constructed dialogue sequence signals the change between the speakers and can be considered a turn-taking strategy used to present a constructed dialogue attributed to another character. Five such examples occur in the data. (22) illustrates such use in the exchange between the middle brother and the priest. The utterance started by the priest is introduced by the *nu*-initial clause, contributing to the turn-taking sequence.

- (22) ([The brother said:] "There was a big thicket there. And the horses went through...")
- | | | | | | |
|-----------|----------|--------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|
| <i>nu</i> | <i>i</i> | <i>čožip</i> | <i>t'äri-ŋ</i> | <i>n'äi-m</i> | <i>ap-sa-l</i> |
| PTCL | PTCL | priest | say-3SG | bread-ACC | eat-PST-2SG.O |
- 'Well, the priest said: "Have you eaten your bread?"' (PMP_1961_ThreeBrothersAndPriest_flk.150)

21 Similar additions are also signaled by *nu* in conversational Russian (cf. Kuosmanen & Multisilta 1999: 58–59).

4. Summary

In the previous section, I have identified two major uses of the discourse particle *nu* in Selkup traditional narratives, related to the two environments: constructed dialogues occurring in the tale between the characters and outside of them. While in constructed dialogues we mostly observe interactional uses found in conversations outside of the genre of traditional storytelling, outside of them, non-interactional uses of the particle become prevalent.

In constructed dialogues, the uses of *nu* correspond to the previously identified uses of *nu* in conversations as found across languages of Europe. Namely, the marker is used together with directive speech acts as a hortative or permissive marker. Furthermore, *nu* is also used as a signal of a response that is not preferred, indicating that the speaker presents an utterance that shall be taken interactionally as not the best possible option in the described circumstances. Such can be forced promises or compromises reached after failed attempts to get a positive response from the interlocutor to suggestions, offers, etc.

Non-interactional uses mostly show a correlation with the position of the utterance with *nu* in the episode structure, while no specific attraction to the position in a more general narrative schema can be found. Thus, *nu* can be interpreted as a segmenting marker operating on the level of organization of discourse units like episodes and can appear on either edge thereof: at the beginning of the new (sub)episode, identified with the change in the prevailing action, set of characters, their location, or time sequence, or, conversely, at the end. The position within the episode (or the narrative part like Evaluation), albeit rare, is associated with two environments: parenthetical expressions presenting additional explanation or indicating the change of turns between the speakers in the constructed dialogue sequence. Thus, even non-interactional uses can be related to the constructed dialogues, at large.

In the opposite direction, we find the segmenting function of the particle in constructed dialogues. Such a function becomes relevant in contexts where the character presents a recap of previous events to another character. In such cases, the particle either opens a new episode or closes it and moves to another event during the recap. Furthermore, we find some less pronounced tendencies regarding the position of the *nu*-initial constructed dialogue units at the end of the (sub)episode,

apparently motivated by a more complex interaction of various factors, like occurrence in the responsive turns, length of the constructed dialogue segment, narrative functions of constructed dialogue segment, etc.

To sum up, the tendencies sketched above suggest that the discourse particle *nu* shows mostly uses as a discourse marker with a segmenting function and operating on the textural level. Its occurrence on different edges of the episode shows that *nu* is not merely used as a coherence device linking the following discourse unit with the preceding one but rather as a marker indicating the boundaries of the (sub)episodes in the larger narrative structure, mostly formed by the Complicating action segment. This function is the most prevalent for *nu* in Selkup traditional storytelling and asks for a broader comparison with other languages in which *nu* is borrowed or where it occurs as an autochthonous marker with a longer tradition of use (like Russian or other Slavic languages).

5. Discussion

In the discussion, I would like to take up the last point raised in the preceding section and present less-targeted glimpses into a similar material from other languages. The motivation is not to validate the current analysis by cross-linguistic evidence, but to situate the observed segmenting function of *nu* in Selkup folktales within a broader typological and discourse-functional perspective. Specifically, similar discourse segmenting effects may be realized either by the same particle in other languages or by different units fulfilling comparable functions.

To address the first case, I illustrate similar uses of the particle *nu* in Chuvash (Turkic), a genealogically unrelated language, in which *nu* also occurs as a borrowed element. I then briefly turn to comparable uses of *nu* in the matrix language, Russian. Second, I discuss Nganasan, a Northern Samoyedic language in which *nu* does not occur in traditional storytelling with the same function²², but where another particle can be found that appears to function similarly to discourse-segmenting *nu* in Selkup. Finally, after these two points are covered, I return to

22 The particle occurs 77 times in the Nganasan Spoken Language Corpus (Brykina et al. 2021), predominantly in code-switches into Russian and in other text genres, including a couple of folktales, where it can be identified as a filler helping to organize speech planning, and does not relate to the textural uses discussed in this subsection.

Selkup data and present some initial observations regarding the discourse markers that, by contrast to *nu*, occur more frequently within one episode and apparently signal a coherence relation between the units therein.

In Chuvash, a similar situation to Selkup can be observed: the discourse particle *nu* is borrowed from Russian and appears in two guises, *nu* and *no*. A brief look at the uses of *nu* in the Narrative Corpus of Chuvash (Nikitina 2022) yields similar observations, as in Selkup. Chuvash *nu* occurs in two environments: constructed dialogues and the main narrative line. To save space, I henceforth focus on the latter uses, disregarding different interactional uses in constructed dialogues. These observations, however, are quite preliminary and would require a more thorough investigation of the particle in the language in the future.

Similarly to Selkup, *nu* in Chuvash tales can be found at the beginning of the new (sub)episode, as in (23).²³ Note that the change of (sub)episode in (23) happens with the change of the temporal setting, as well as the start of the new action sequences.

- (23) Chuvash (Turkic)
 (“‘You,” he says, “hide me” he says. “Let me hide.” He hid [and] settled with them.’)
no, ɛakə... ir-pa pol-r-ĕ ʂəlŋ-ĕ
 PTCL this morning-INS be-PST-3 younger.brother-POSS.3
tər-atʲ.
 stand-PRS.3SG
 ‘Well, that one... the morning has arrived, the little brother gets up.’
 (Chuvash_Tavaru_end.021)

The closing function is less prominent in Chuvash for *nu*, although it can be assigned to the particle when it co-occurs with the Russian particle *vot* ‘here’, as in (24).²⁴ By contrast, the self-standing *vot* is relatively frequent as an episode-closing marker in the language, although

23 I identified the division between discourse units based on the nearest surrounding context. Such a division does not allow for identifying whether the break here happens between episodes or sub-episodes only.

24 Note that the part following *nu vot* starts with the new development corresponding to the protagonist’s movement and the change of place. On similar uses of *nu vot* in conversational Russian, see Kuosmanen & Multisilta (1999: 58).

a more thorough check would be necessary in the future to back up this observation with quantitative data.

(24) Chuvash (Turkic)

<i>Soran</i>	<i>ćine</i>	<i>sap-atʲ</i>	<i>te</i>	<i>měnne.</i>
wound	top.POSS.3SG.DAT	pour-PRS.3SG	and	what.ANAPH.DAT
<i>tyr-le-n-s[e]</i>		<i>lar-atʲ,</i>	<i>nu</i>	<i>vot.</i>
straight-VBLZ-RFL-CV.COORD		sit-PRS.3SG	PTCL	PTCL
<i>Tox-atʲ</i>				
leave-PRS.3SG				
‘When he has sprayed the [girl’s] wound with that [water], it heals, that’s it now . He comes out.’ (Chuvash_Ivan_sadovnik_end.434–435)				

Since the two languages that borrowed *nu* from Russian show similar uses of the particle in the genre of traditional narratives (in particular, at the beginning of the new episode), such observations regarding the function of *nu* shall also be extendable to the matrix language. Indeed, on a brief check of *nu* in the folklore texts in the Russian National Corpus (RNC), I have found similar episode-opening uses of *nu* whose occurrence correlates with the start of the new development in the narrative, as in (25). To save space, I present the translation parallel to the example line and omit the glossing line.

(25) Russian (Eastern Slavic; Indo-European)

<i>Nu</i> <i>žyl byl starik s staruxoju</i>	‘ Well once there lived an old man and an old woman’
<i>u nix byla dočka Aljonuška</i>	they had a daughter Alyonushka
<i>i synok Ivanuška</i>	and a son Ivanushka
<i>nu a</i> <i>otec u nix umir</i>	well their father died
<i>mat’ tože umirla</i>	mother also died
<i>nu</i> <i>Aljonuška i gvarit...</i>	well Alyonushka then says...’
(Russian National Corpus, Fragment skazki o sestrice Aljonuške i bratce Ivanuške)	

Similar examples with *nu* are also found in the Russian speech from Tomsk region, as in (26), where *nu i* indicates the return to the main narrative line after the evaluative comment (‘I have grown there that much’) and correlates with the start of the new episode.

(26) Russian (Eastern Slavic; Indo-European)

(*Oj, potom v drugu derevnju pošli, dve kilometry. On so mnoj pošel. Ja tam naverno, vot stol' vyrosla.*)

Nu	i	<i>nam</i>	<i>ne</i>	<i>da-l-i</i>	<i>tam</i>
PTCL	PTCL	1PL.DAT	NEG	give-PST-PL	there
<i>povesel-it'-sja,</i>		<i>ničë –</i>	<i>draka</i>	<i>nacija-l-a-s'</i> [sic!]	...
have.fun.PFV-INF-REF		nothing	fight[F]	start.PFV-PST-SG.F-REF	

‘(Oh, then we went to another village, two kilometers. He went with me. I have grown there that much.) **Well**, we didn’t manage to have fun there, it’s nothing – the fight has broken out...’ (Russian National Corpus, Ženixi [Veršino, Tomskij rajon, Tomskaja oblast’, 1988])

Now, let us turn to Nganasan where the discourse particle *nu* is not used as in Southern Selkup, Chuvash, or Russian (see fn. 17), but where we find the autochthonous particle *tə*, which is often translated as ‘hy’ into Russian and ‘well’ into English, suggesting possible parallels between the markers. The particle *tə* is quite frequent in the Nganasan Spoken Language Corpora and counts 4096 hits. It has a demonstrative origin and apparently represents a fossilized basic form of the distal demonstrative ‘that’ (Wagner-Nagy 2018; also see Janhunen 1977: 144), which is not used in this form as a demonstrative pronoun anymore.²⁵

The particle *tə* is apparently related to another particle *təʔ* ‘after all, surely’ (Wagner-Nagy 2018: 172), although their positions in the sentence differ drastically. While the particle *təʔ* always follows the emphasized sentence part, *tə* as a counterpart of textural *nu* occurs turn/sentence-initially (sometimes after interjections like *ou* or the temporal adverbial *tahariaa* ‘now’). The particle *təʔ* can also be used as an adversative conjunction (like Ru. *no*) (Wagner-Nagy 2018: 432), while the textural particle *tə* can function as a phatic interjection with the meaning ‘yes’ (Wagner-Nagy 2018: 174). The variety of the meanings assigned to *tə* and found in the corpora cannot be covered here, but a short glimpse into its textural uses can nonetheless be briefly presented.

Like with *nu* in Selkup and Chuvash, we find the particle occurring at the beginning of (sub)episodes, starting a new development in the tale, as in (27). The previous episode, preceding the example in (27), focused on a different set of participants and described the kidnapping

25 The demonstrative pronoun has a 3SG possessive suffix attached to the pronominal stem: *təti* (Wagner-Nagy 2018: 127).

of the Nganasan's wife by the Dolgan antagonist. After that, the return of the protagonist follows, who eventually finds his wife being kidnapped and sets off on her search.

(27) Nganasan (Uralic)

(‘He kidnapped her; they drove way.’)

Tə, hii-m-ti-tə tuu-ʔə

PTCL night-TRL-TMP-LAT come-PFV(.3SG.S)

n'aa-ʔa-rə basa-ʔmuə-gətə-tu.

Nganasan-AUG-POSS.2SG hunt-ACT-ABL-OBL.POSS.3SG

‘Well, the Nganasan came back from hunting in the evening.’ (JDH_00_

Njaakju_fld.030)

Along the tale, we find similar other uses that allow us to assign a segmenting function to the particle based on the occurrence in the new episode. However, it is not always straightforward, since *tə* also quite often occurs in constructed dialogues, at least in the tale more thoroughly investigated here. Nganasan folklore also leaves the switch between the narrative line and constructed dialogues often blurred, which further complicates the task of dividing the narrative into episodes and identifying switches between the narrator and the characters. Thus, it remains a task for further studies to investigate whether the particle can be more straightforwardly labelled as a discourse-segmenting particle. Nonetheless, it can be suggested that the particles that acquire the translation ‘well’ (or Ru. ‘hy’) may exhibit similar functions in the genre of traditional storytelling across languages and be associated with the narrators segmenting discourse and signaling such a segmentation with a dedicated (set of) particle(s).

Now, after some parallels in other languages have been illustrated, let us return briefly to Selkup and look at the marker that functions conversely to *nu* and is used to signal discourse coherence within the episode. Again, a rather superficial look at the tales shows that such a function can be assigned to the discourse marker *a*, borrowed from Russian. By contrast to *nu*, the discourse marker *a* rarely occurs at the episode boundary, unless it is a sub-episode consisting only of two turns. Although discourse markers are often omitted in Selkup tales and the linking often happens by merely juxtaposing the turns, we find episodes where *a* creates a coherence relation between the units in the

episode. (28) presents a short excerpt from the tale, which starts with the episode-opening line. Note how the units occurring within one episode occasionally are linked with this marker placed on the left-edge of the turn. To save space and achieve a better representation, I present the translation parallel to the example line and omit the glossing line.

(28) Selkup (Uralic)

- | | | |
|-----|---|--|
| 237 | <i>Sernaŋ.</i> | He came in. |
| 238 | <i>A na ma:tqin tatpl'ekaj
udoyin aurej stol, a na
stoloyin apsot kej mi:lin,
kundare:di as kundare:di
apsot.</i> | In this house to the right there
was a table, full of meals,
drinks, various food. |
| 239 | <i>Nil'd'i apsot kut'ennej
t'äŋwan.</i> | One wouldn't find such food
anywhere. |
| 240 | <i>Inne manžediŋ, innen qula
ti:mbattə waryič'ka i kiba.</i> | He looked up: above [him]
people were flying, big and
small. |
| 241 | <i>I wes tulaze jewatt.</i> | And all of them had wings. |
| 242 | <i>A kwec'i pl'ekaj udoyin čečan
i:bigajc'ika ras i:bkaj i:bkaj
tiss.</i> | And to the left there stood a big
tank. |
| 243 | <i>A na tissoyin perčiŋ sa:
seyič'ka.</i> | Black tar was boiling in that
tank. |
| 244 | <i>A na sa:yin perčattə qula,
inne konsel'd'z'iqwatt...</i> | And there were people boiling
in the tar, jumping out of it... |
- (PMP_1961_ThreeBrothersAnPriest_flk.237–244)

The example in (28) shows differences from the segmenting uses of *nu* illustrated in Selkup in Section 3.2, and similar uses of *nu* in Chuvash and *tə* in Nganasan above, and can be more closely related to the coherence signaling function ascribed in the previous studies for *nu* in European languages like Polish (cf. Sawicki 2016; also see Auer & Maschler 2016b). The material described here, however, shows that in the genre of traditional storytelling, the coherence signaling is not peculiar to *nu*, as it is apparently the case in the context of dyadic interaction during conversations, and other markers take up such a function in a context of unidirectional verbal exchange.

To wrap up the discussion, one must admit that even though certain functions of *nu* become more prominent in the genre of traditional storytelling across languages, the overt discourse marking with the particles or conjunctions is hardly obligatory. Since the current paper merely focused on the contexts where the discourse particle is present, future studies may extend the current investigation by comparing contexts where overt discourse marking with discourse particles or conjunctions is present and contexts where discourse segmenting is accomplished, or, conversely, episode-internal coherence is maintained, but no overt marking is present. It is merely a speculation, but perhaps here Labovian narrative parts may play a more significant role and show different distributions of explicit vs. implicit discourse marking across narrative parts.

6. Conclusions

This paper has described the uses of the discourse particle *nu* in the genre of traditional storytelling in the Southern Samoyedic language Selkup, with particular attention to its distribution across different discourse environments. The findings suggest that the functions of *nu* cannot be adequately captured without reference to larger units of discourse organization.

More specifically, the analysis has shown that the function of the particle can be better understood by taking into account more robust criteria such as its position within the narrative structure. In this respect, an analytic approach to semantically fuzzy elements like discourse particles helps to identify the environments in which different functions of the particle become prominent, rather than treating these functions as fixed or context-independent.

On a more general level, this paper has also aimed to demonstrate that the genre of traditional storytelling, often neglected in favor of conversational data, can yield new observations regarding the functions of discourse particles. As illustrated in the preceding section, traditional storytelling can provide a relatively stable environment for cross-linguistic comparison of discourse phenomena, which are realized in a similar way across the languages despite grammatical and variation in storytelling traditions.

Acknowledgements

This work was supported by the Estonian Research Council (grant PRG1290) and by the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research (grant TK215, “Estonian Roots”).

Abbreviations

ABL – ablative, ACC – accusative, ADJ – adjective, ADV – adverb, ALL – allative, ANAPH – anaphoric, AUG – augmentative, CO – coaffix, COORD – coordinating (converb), CV – converb, DAT – dative, DIM – diminutive, DRV – derivative, DUR – durative, E – epenthetic vowel, F – feminine, FUT – future, HAB – habitual, HORT – hortative, ILL – illative, IMP – imperative, INCH – inchoative, INDEF – indefinite, INF – infinitive, INFER – inferential, INS – instrumental, IPFV – imperfective, ITER – iterative, LAT – lative, NAR – narrative, NEG – negative, NOM – nominative, O – objective (conjugation), OBL – oblique, OPT – optative, PFV – perfective, PL – plural, POSS – possessive, PTCL – particle, QUOT – quotative marker, REF – reflexive, S – subjective (conjugation), SG – singular, TMP – temporal, TRL – translative, VBLZ – verbalizer

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Kokkuvõte. Denys Teptiuk: Diskursusepartikli *nu* (~ *no*) suhtlusväline kasutus lõunasõlkupi traditsioonilistes narratiivides. Diskursusepartikkel *nu* ja selle variandid on Euroopa keeltes laialt levinud ning neid on mitmete keelte vestlusandmestike põhjal suhteliselt hästi uuritud. Käesolev artikkel uurib *nu* kasutamist väljaspool vestlusandmeid traditsioonilises narratiivi žanris ja keskendub *nu* suhtlusvälisele kasutamisele lõunasõlkupi keele murretes. Tulemused näitavad, et partikkel *nu* esineb traditsioonilises narratiivis kahes peamises kontekstis: konstrueeritud dialoogides, mis esitavad tegelaste kõnet ja mõtteid, ning narratiivses põhivoolus. Seal esineb *nu* sageli episoodide piiridel ja seda saab seostada kas episoodi alguse või lõpu tähistamisega. Sarnaseid *nu* partikli kasutusviise leidub ka teiste keelte narratiivides, kus see partikkel on kas autohtoonne või laenatud element. Diskursust segmenteeriva *nu* funktsionaalseid vasteid võib leida keeltes, kus *nu* esineb laenatud elemendina, kuid täidab muid funktsioone.

Märksõnad: diskursuse struktuur, diskursusemarkerid, narratiivne diskursus

Appendix

Table 4 lists the frequency of *nu* in each tale, without distinguishing between the variants shown in Table 2.

Table 4. The number of occurrences of *nu* per tale.

Tale	Speaker ID	Subdialect	<i>Nu</i> , n
A boy and a devil	PMP	Chaya	14
A dog, a cat, and a magic ring	PMP	Chaya	22
About Itja	PMP	Chaya	14
Bodyless Head	PMP	Chaya	10
Fairy Tale	PMP	Chaya	25
Forest Woman	PMP	Chaya	15
Playing with eyes	PMP	Chaya	5
Three brothers and priest	PMP	Chaya	30
Soldier made a woman alive	PVD	Chaya	1
God punished women	PVD	Chaya	2
Unfaithful wife and robbers	PVD	Chaya	12
Sister and brother-piglet	SEV	Middle Ob	15
Three sisters	SEV	Middle Ob	4
Daughter and robbers	SUF	Middle Ob	7
Itja catches Father-Fish-Mother-Fish	SVG	Ket	9
Prince Ivan and the Firebird	TFF	Middle Ob	4
Sparrow, Cat and Vihorka	TFF	Middle Ob	1
Frog princess	TMR	Middle Ob	2