

Exceptive construction *X-zər poen'ia* in Poshkart Chuvash¹

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1.1. Language name

Chuvash (ISO: 639) is a Turkic language spoken in Volga region of Russia. It is the only preserved language from the Oghur branch of the Turkic family. As of 2010, it has 1,042,989 native speakers (Wikipedia). Chuvash has three dialects: Viryal, or Upper dialect, Anatri, or Lower dialect, and Poshkart dialect. In Glottolog, Chuvash is classified as a threatened language.

1.2. Morphological type

As other Turkic languages, Chuvash has predominantly agglutinative morphology, i.e., a single morpheme usually corresponds to a single grammatic category, and vice versa. Consider examples from the nominal (1) and verbal (1) domain:

(1) a. *toratɛ-ə-san-tɛan*

thread-P_3-PL-ABL

‘from these threads’

b. *kəlar-i-me-ri-ë*

take_out-POT-NEG-PST-3SG

‘(s)he did not manage to take out’

1.3. Word order

The default word order in Chuvash is SOV, with the exclusions of highly topicalized arguments that can occur in postverbal position (Andreev 1970). Chuvash generally patterns left-branching syntax: for instance, Chuvash has postpositions, as in (2):

(2) a. *pet'i-a* *valli*

P.-OBJ for

‘for Petya’

b. *sxemə* *tərək*

scheme along

‘according to plan’

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1.4. Case system

Chuvash has a rich case system. Case markers do not merge with number markers, although sometimes are phonetically inseparable.

	SG	PL
NOM	<i>jidə</i> dog	<i>jidə-zam</i> dog-PL
GEN	<i>jidə-n</i> dog-GEN	<i>jidə-zan</i> dog-PL[GEN]
OBJ	<i>jitt-a</i> dog-OBJ	<i>jidə-zani-a</i> / <i>jidə-zan-e</i> dog-PL-OBJ / dog-PL-OBJ
LOC	<i>jidə-ra</i> dog-LOC	<i>jidə-zan-dza</i> dog-PL-LOC
ABL	<i>jidə-ran</i> dog-ABL	<i>jidə-zan-dzan</i> dog-PL-ABL
INS	<i>jidə-ba</i> dog-INS	<i>jidə-zam-ba</i> dog-PL-INS
CAR	<i>jidə-zər</i> dog-CAR	<i>jidə-zam-zər</i> dog-PL-CAR
CSL	<i>jidə-zən</i> dog-CSL	<i>jidə-zam-zən</i> dog-PL-CSL

A tricky property of Chuvash case system is that it does not have different marking for direct and indirect objects – in both the cases, the objective case is used. This is a potential concern for researching the transitivity in Chuvash since there is no overt distinction between the two types of objects. However, there are some tests that can help to distinguish between the direct and indirect object (Kholodilova 2021).

The order of the nominal markers is always the same: STEM-POSS-NUM-CASE, as illustrated in (1).

1.5 Focus constructions

Chuvash features a focus particle =*ak* that is attached to the focalized phrase [Zakirova 2018]:

- (3) *epe uram-ra kušak tup-r-əm, kušak ək kun=ax šəši tət-rë*
 I street-LOC cat find-PST-1SG cat **this day=EMPH** mouse catch-PST.3SG

'I found a cat in the street. That very day the cat caught a mouse'.² (Zakirova 2018)

As far as I know, there is no difference in case marking between unfocalized and focalized NPs. There is no cleft construction in Chuvash, and no focus-like marking is involved in the formation of exceptives.

² The sentence in (3) illustrates the pattern in Standard Chuvash, but the generalization holds for Poshkart Chuvash as well (Zakirova 2018).

The position of *wh*-words in Chuvash is flexible: according to (Shikhantsova 2018), they can occur in-situ (4), on the left periphery (4) and right periphery (4).

(4) a. *es vixodnoj mën t-a-n?*

2SG weekend what do-NPST-2SG

‘What do you do on weekends?’

b. *xəðzan es xola-ja kaj-a-n?*

when 2SG town-OBJ go-NPST-2SG

‘When do you go to the town?’

c. *petʲə porn-a-t əšta?*

P. live-NPST-3SG where

‘Where does Petya live?’

It is worth noting that these data are taken from unpublished fieldwork materials and may need further verification. In addition, Chuvash has a close contact with Russian, and all the consultants we worked with are bilingual, so some variations in the word order in questions may be due to Russian influence. It is especially likely in the context of elicitation, where Chuvash stimuli were given as direct translations of Russian sentences. And finally, the effect of semantic and pragmatic factors on the placement of *wh*-words in Chuvash is yet to be understood.

2. Basic exceptive constructions

According to (Baranova et al. 2021), the main exceptive construction in Chuvash consists of the postposition *poenʲa*³ ‘except’ and a noun phrase in the caritive case, as in (5):

(5) *man-zər poenʲa por=da xola-ja kaj-za*

me-CAR except all=ADD town-OBJ go-CV_SIM

‘Everybody except me went to the town.’

In Poshkart Chuvash, the postposition *poenʲa* is used only in its exceptive function, but in other dialects the postposition itself may have caritive semantics (Ashmarin, 1928–1950: iss. X, p. 25).

3. Free and connective exceptives

Judging from the elicited data, *poenʲa* appears to be a connective exceptive. The main evidence for that is the constituency test: exceptive construction can be coordinated with an NP (6).

³ Morphologically, *poenʲa* is the objective case form of the noun ‘head’ with the possessive marker: *poe-ni-a* [head-P_3-OBJ].

(6) a. [[*por aržin atɛa-zam=da vacə-zər poɛnʲa*] *tada maʂə*] *təlbol-a kil-tɛ-ë*
 all young man-PL=ADD V.-CAR except and M. meeting-OBJ come-PST-3SG

‘Masha and every boy except Vasya came to the meeting.’

b. *vacə por xer-zen-e=de maʂə-zər poɛnʲa tada*
 V. all girl-PL-OBJ=ADD M.-CAR except and
por aržin atɛa=da petʲə-zər poɛnʲa telbol-n-a tɛən-tɛ-ë
 all young man-PL=ADD P.-CAR except meet-PC_RES-OBJ invite-PST-3SG

‘Vasya invited all the girls except Masha and all the boys except Petya to the meeting.’

The fragmentation test also shows that the exceptive construction is a constituent, since the construction with *poɛnʲa* can be a self-sufficient answer to a question:

(7) a. *kam-a es ujav-a tɛən-d-ën*
 who-OBJ thou party-OBJ invite-PST-2SG

‘Whom did you invite on the party?’

b. *pornʲ-a=da vacə-zər poɛnʲa*
 all-P_3-OBJ=ADD V.-CAR except

‘Everyone except Vasya.’

However, *poɛnʲa* can also be used as a free exceptive. The postpositional phrase does not have to be adjacent to its associate: it can move on the left or the right periphery, as shown in (8).

(8) a. *təlbol-n-a por=de kil-tɛ-ë, vacə-zər poɛnʲa*
 meet-PC_RES-OBJ all-ADD come-PST-3PL V.-CAR except

b. *vacə-zər poɛnʲa, təlbol-n-a por-de kil-tɛ-ë*
 V.-CAR except meet-PC_RES-OBJ all=ADD come-PST-3PL

c. *təlbol-n-a, vacə-zər poɛnʲa, por-de kil-tɛ-ë*
 meet-PC_RES-OBJ V.-CAR except all=ADD come-PST-3PL

‘Everybody came to the meeting except Vasya.’

Thus, on the one hand, the exceptive construction with *poɛnʲa* passes the constituency tests ((6), (7)), and on the other hand, the associate does not have to be adjacent to the exceptive propositional phrase. That suggests that the exceptive construction is base-generated as a connected exceptive, but the exception phrase can be extraposed.

5. Characteristics of the associate

5.1. Quantificational associates

The PPs with *poen'a* violate the Quantifier Constraint: in addition to the quantifier phrases (9), their associates can be superlatives (9), DPs (9) and numerical phrases (9).

(9) a. *jep por ar-zin-atca-zan'i-a=da vacə-zər poen'a*

I all man-person-child-PL-OBJ=ADD V.-CAR except

tada maş-a xəna-ja tēn-d-ēm

and M.-OBJ guest-OBJ invite-PST-1SG

‘I invited Masha and all boys except Vasya.’

b. *jep maşa tada por ar-zin-atca-zan-dzan itla-rak-ienə*

I M.-OBJand all man-person-child-PL-ABL much-CMPR-???

pet'ə-zər tada ser'ozə-zər poen'a xəna-ja tēn-d-ēm

P.-CAR and S.-CAR except guest-OBJ invite-PST-1SG

‘I invited Masha and most boys except Petya and Seryozha.’

c. *professor xəj-ən vërenegene-zen'i-e ivan-zər poen'a*

professor self.P_3-GEN student-PL-OBJ V.-CAR except

tada xəjən arəm-n'i-a xəna-ja tēn-tə-ë

and self.P_3-GEN wife-P_3-OBJ guest-OBJ invite-PST-1SF

‘Professor invited his students except Ivan and his wife.’

d. *jëp maş-a tada vacə-zər poen'a vonə ar-zin-atca-ja tēn-d-ēm*

I M.-OBJ and V.-CAR except ten man-person-child-OBJ invite-PST-1SG

‘I invited Masha and ten boys except Vasya.’

My consultants did not agree on whether the caseless noun phrase can be an associate of the exceptive in (10). One of the consultants said that the sentence is contradictory: it implies that the bulldogs are not dogs. Another consultant judged the sentence (10) as fine. The third consultant said that for the sentence to be acceptable, one should add the word *itti* ‘other’ to the noun *jidəzam* ‘dogs’. Thus, it is not clear whether the caseless NPs can be an associate of the exceptives with *poen'a* – further research is needed.

(10) *jëp bul'dok-sər poen'a jidə-zan'i-a/ jidə-zam jorad-ad-əp*

I bulldog-CAR except dog-PL-OBJ dog-PL love-NPST-1SG

‘I love dogs except bulldogs.’

5.2. Implicit associates

According to two of the three consultants, the exceptive phrase with *poen'a* can have an implicit associate, as in (11):

- (11) *vaeə tundi kon-zər poen'a lajək ës-let*
 V. Monday day-CAR except well work-VBZ.3SG
 ‘Vasya works well, except on Mondays.’

The third consultant judged the sentence ungrammatical and asked to add an explicit associate.

6. Characteristics of the exception

6.1. Categorial options

The postposition *poen'a* can take as complements NPs (12), PPs (12), and nominalized participles (12), but not infinitival phrases⁴ (12) or CPs (12). Not every PP can be a complement: for instance, among four tested postpositions, only two (*valli* ‘for’ and *tərək* ‘along’) were acceptable in a complement of the exceptive constructions; the other two postpositions, *pergi* ‘due to’ and *patn'a* ‘towards’, cannot host the caritive case (12): consultants asked to add a full participle that would take it.

- (12) a. *vaeə pet'ə-zər poen'a por-n'i-a=da tēlbol-n-a tēn-tē-ë*
 V. P.-CAR except all-P_3-OBJ=ADD meet-PC_RES-OBJ invite-PST-3SG
 ‘Vasya called everyone to the meeting, except Petya.’
- b. *vaeə maşə valli-zər poen'a ni-xam valli=de taşla-mas*
 V. M. for-CAR except NEG-who for=ADD dance-NEG.NPST[.3SG]
 ‘Vasya did not dance for anyone except for Masha.’
- c. *kon lajək ert-ri-ë, sivë pol-n-i-zər poen'a*
 day good go_through-PST-3SG cold be-PC_RES-CAR except
 ‘The day passed well, except for being cold.’
- d. **vəl ɛi-me-zər poen'a ni-m=de tu-ma-ri-ə*
 he eat-INF-CAR except NEG-what=ADD do-NEG-PST-3SG
 Intended: ‘He did not do anything except he ate.’
- e. **kon lajək ert-ri-ë, sivë pol-tē-ə-zər poen'a*

⁴ One of the three consultants accepted sentence (12d) with the infinitival phrase, but then the two others found it ungrammatical.

day good go_through cold be-PST-3SG-CAR except

Intended: ‘The day passed well, except it was cold.’

f. ^{??}*mēnbor katei pergi=de maʃə magər-tə-ə*
 all groom because_of=ADD M. be_sad-PST-3SG
vaɛə pergi-zər poɛnʲa
 V. because_of-CAR except

‘Masha was sad about all of her grooms except for Vasya.’

6.2. Case marking on nominal exceptions.

The postposition *poɛnʲa* ‘except’ assigns the caritive case to its complement – it is ungrammatical to omit it, as well as change it to another case (although the whole set of all the possible cases is not checked yet).

(13) *maʃə tada por ar-zʲin-atɛa vaɛə*(-zər/*-a) poɛnʲa kil-tə-ə*
 M. and all man-person-child V.-CAR/OBJ except come-PST-3SG

‘Masha and all boys except for Vasya came.’

Without the postposition, the caritive case can be used on its own, but it no longer obtains the same meaning, as shown in (14).

(14) a. *maʃə tada por ar-zʲin-atɛa vaɛə-zər kil-tə-ə*
 M. and all man-person-child V.-CAR come-PST-3SG

‘Masha and all boys came without Vasya.’

b. *vaɛə petʲə-zər por ar-zʲin-atɛa-zam=da tɛən-tə-ĕ*
 V. P.-CAR all man-person-child-PL=ADD invite-PST-3SG

‘Vasya invited all the boys, and he did it without Petya.’

(Intended interpretation: ‘Vasya invited all the boys except Petya.’)

7. Clausal exceptives

The construction with *poɛnʲa* cannot be used as a full-fledged clausal exceptive – it fails all the relevant tests.

7.1. Possible expression of exception by a full clause

The exceptive marker *poɛnʲa* cannot take finite a full clause as an argument (15) – it can only take participles (15).

- (15) a. *vəl ci-n-i-zər* *poɕnʲa* *n-im=de* *tu-ma-rʲ-ə*
 he eat-PC_RES-P_3-CAR except NEG-what=ADD do-NEG-PST-3SG
 ‘He did not do anything except he ate.’
- b. **petʲa* *kil-me-rʲ-ë-zər* *poɕnʲa* *por=da* *kil-tɛ-ëɛ*
 P. come-NEG-PST-3SG-CAR except all=ADD come-PST-3PL
 ‘Everybody came, except Petya did not come.’

7.2. Multiple exceptions

The exceptive construction with *poɕnʲa* cannot take multiple exceptions: the verb cannot be elided (16), a participle corresponding to the omitted predicate must be used (16).

- (16) a. **ni-xam=da* *ni-xam-a=da* *jorat-mas,*
 NEG-who=ADD NEG-who-OBJ=ADD love-NEG.NPST[3SG]
maɕə *petʲ-(a)-zər* *poɕnʲa*
 M. P.-OBJ-CAR except
 Intended: ‘No one loves no one, except Masha {loves} Petya.’
- b. *ni-xam=da* *ni-xam-a=da* *jorat-mas,*
 NEG-who=ADD NEG-who-OBJ=ADD love-NEG.NPST[3SG]
maɕa *petʲ-a* *jorat-n-i-zər* *poɕnʲa*
 M. P.-OBJ love-PC_RES-P_3-CAR except
 ‘No one loves no one, except Masha loves Petya.’

7.3. Sluicing interpretations

In the sentences with sluicing, the sluiced wh-word can only be interpreted as related to the elided copy of the whole main clause, but not as related to the potential exceptive clause. Thus, this test also points to the phrasal analysis of *poɕnʲa* exceptives.

- (17) *paɕə-zər* *poɕnʲa ni-xam-da* *tëlbol-n-a* *kil-me-rʲ-ë,*
 P.-CAR except NEG-who=ADD meet-PC_RES-OBJ come-NEG-PST-3SG
mën-zën-n-e *jep* *pël-me-p*
 why-CSL-P_3-OBJ I know-NEG-1SG
 ‘Everybody came except Petya, and I do not know why.’
 Acceptable interpretation: I am surprised that so many guests came.
 Unacceptable interpretation: I am surprised that Petya did not come.

7.4. Clausal/speaker-oriented adverbials

Speaker-oriented adverbials can modify the exceptive phrase:

(18) *vaεə por-nⁱ-a=da tēlbol-n-a tēn-tē-ē,*
 V. all-P_3-OBJ=ADD meet-PC_RES-OBJ call-PST-3SG
ʂelʲ petʲə-zər poεnʲa
 unfortunately P.-CAR except

‘Vasya invited everyone, except, unfortunately, Petya.’

If the exceptive phrase is before the main clause, the preceding adverbial, in addition to the low scop reading, has a high scope reading – this reading is actually preferred. This suggests that this adverbial *ʂelʲ* is not an interjection-like element, but a syntactic element taking different scopes.

(19) *ʂelʲ petʲə-zər poεnʲa*
 unfortunately P.-CAR except
vaεə por-nⁱ-a=da tēlbol-n-a tēn-tē-ē,
 V. all-P_3-OBJ=ADD meeting-PC_RES-OBJ call-PST-3SG

1. ‘Unfortunately, Vasya invited everyone.’

2. ‘Unfortunately, Vasya did not invite Petya.’

7.5. Preposition stranding

Poshkart Chuvash does not have postposition stranding: the complement NP must be adjacent to the postposition.

(20) a. *kam valli es taʂla-n?*
 who for thou dance-NPST.2SG
 ‘For whom are you dancing?’
 b. **kam es valli taʂla-n?*
 who thou for dance-NPST.2SG
 ‘Who are you dancing for?’

The exceptive PPs follow the same pattern: the complement must be adjacent to *poεnʲa*.

(21) a. *kam-zər poεnʲa es pornʲa=da jorad-an?*
 who-CAR except thou all=ADD love-NPST.2SG
 ‘You love everyone except whom?’
 b. **kam-zər es poεnʲa pornʲa=da jorad-an?*
 who-CAR thou except all=ADD love-NPST.2SG
 ‘You love everyone except whom?’

7.6. Internal reading with ‘same’ or ‘different’

This test is inapplicable in Poskhart Chuvash since, to the best of my knowledge, it does not have lexical items that have the corresponding semantic ambiguity.

7.7. Collective predicates

The associate of the exceptive phrase can be a “group” argument of a collective predicate:

- (22) *por-da kuxn'i-a poctar-an-të-ëc, vacə-zər poɛn'ia*
 all=ADD kitchen-OBJ gather-REFL-PST-3PL V.-CAR except

‘All the people gathered at the kitchen, except Vasya.’

7.8. Binding theory

The complement of the postposition *poɛn'ia* can be bound by the subject, but not vice versa:

- (23) a. *xəj-zər poɛn'ia, vacə ni-xam-a=da jorat-mas*
 self.P_3-CAR except V. NEG-who-OBJ=ADD love-NEG.NPST[.3SG]

‘Vasya loves no one, except himself.’

- b. **vacə-zər poɛn'ia, xəj ni-xam-a=da jorat-mas*
 V.-CAR except self NEG-who-OBJ=ADD love-NEG.NPST[.3SG]

‘Vasya loves no one, except himself.’

7.9. Island sensitivity

Exceptives with *poɛn'ia* are island-sensitive, as illustrated with the complex NP island below: Poskhart Chuvash does feature the constraint (24), and the exceptive obeys it as well (25).

- (24) a. *vacə pet'i-a top-agan ɛin-e pël-mes*
 V. P.-OBJ find-PC_PRS man-OBJ know-NEG.NPST[3SG]

‘Vasya does not know the person that saved Petya.’

- b. **pet'i-a vacə top-agan ɛin-e pël-mes*
 P.-OBJ V. find-PC_PRS man-OBJ know-NEG.NPST[3SG]

‘PETYA Vasya does not know the person that saved.’

- (25) a. *vacə pet'ə-zər poɛn'ia por=da jorad-agan kënege-je*
 V. P.-CAR except all=ADD love-PC_PRS book-OBJ

vula-za tok-ri-ə
 read-CV_SIM leave-PST-3SG

‘Vasya read the book that everybody loves except Petya.’

- b. **pet'ə-zər poɛn'ia vacə por=da jorad-agan kënege-je*

P.-CAR except V. all=ADD love-PC_PRS book-OBJ
vula-za *tok-rʲ-ə*
 read-CV_SIM leave-PST-3SG

‘Vasya read the book that everybody loves except Petya.’

8. Issues for discussion

Although the postposition *poɛnʲa* requires that its complement bears the caritive case, that complement does not have to be a (prototypical) NP: *poɛnʲa* can attach postpositional and participial phrases, and they are also marked with the caritive case.

(26) *vaɛə maʂə valli-zər poɛnʲa ni-xam valli=de taʂla-mas*
 V. M. for-CAR except NEG-who for=ADD dance-NEG.NPST[.3SG]

‘Vasya did not dance for anyone except for Masha.’

This ability of the caritive case to be attached to a non-nominal category is not restricted to its usages in the exceptive construction with *poɛnʲa*. For instance, it can combine with infinitival clauses per se (Khomchenkova, Fedotov 2019):

(27) *jep abat ɛi-me-zër(=ek) vilʲa-ma ka-rʲ-əm.*
 I soup eat-INF-CAR=EMPH play-INF go-PST-1SG

‘I went out to play, without having eaten my soup’.

The caritive morpheme can participate in case-stacking (Baranova et al. 2021), as in (28):

(28) *vəl joldaʂ-sam-zər-zanʲ-a poləz-at*
 he friend-PL-CAR-PL-OBJ help-NPST.3SG

‘He helps [those] without friends.’ (Baranova et al. 2021)

These facts suggest that the caritive case is a cross-categorial marker independently of its usage in the exceptive construction.

9. Additional observations and comments

Since *poɛnʲa* clearly has usages as a connected exceptive, it is hard to test whether it can have a structure of a free exceptive which is not derived from the connected exceptive structure via extraposition of the associate. However, the preliminary data presented below may serve as an argument in favor of the presence of the additional “independent” free structure.

Poshkart Chuvash features a verb *poləʂtar* ‘to acquaint’ that selects two arguments: one with the objective marker and the other with the instrumental marker (29).

(29) *vaɛə por-nʲ-a=da por-i-ba=da poləʂ-tar-tə-ə*
 V. all-P_3-OBJ=ADD all-P_3-INS=ADD get_acquainted-CAUS-PST-3SG

‘Vasya acquainted everyone with everyone.’

Crucially, the exceptive phrase can be attached to the verbal phrase with *poləʂtar* ‘acquaint’ and operate on the two arguments together. Consider example (30):

(30) *ivanov-sər poeń'a vacə ku xer-arəm-zan'a ar-zin-zam-ba*
 I.-CAR except V. this bride-woman-PL-OBJ man-person-PL-INS
poləş-tar-za
 get_acquainted-CV_SIM

‘Except Ivanovs, Vasya acquainted all these women with all the men.’

The empirical observation is very preliminary and needs further investigation. However, the idea is that if it is true that the arguments do not form a constituent, we cannot analyze the free exceptive usage of *poeń'a* in (30) via extraposition of the associate, since the exception phrase is not associated with any specific constituent. The excepted individuals, the couple of Ivanovs, consist of an exception from the set of brides and an exception from the set of grooms, and these groups are denoted by two distinct NPs. Since the extraposition analysis is not applicable, we must postulate an alternative, independent free structure for the exceptive in (30).

10. Consultants⁵

The data were collected from three native speakers of Poshkart Chuvash, living in the village of Maloye Karachkino (Poshkart), Chuvash Republic, Russia. All the three speakers also speak Standard Chuvash and Russian, but Russian is their L2: they all started learning it at the age of 7 or even later.

The first consultant is male, 64 years old, has higher education. He speaks Chuvash everyday with his family.

The second consultant is female, 66-67 years old, has higher education. She speaks Chuvash every day when she interacts with other people from the village but speaks Russian in school and with some of her relatives.

The third speaker is female, 68-69 years old, has higher education. She speaks Chuvash every day with her family members and other habitants of the village.

Abbreviations

1, 2, 3 – persons, ADD – additive particle, ABL – ablative case, CAUS – causative, CAR – caritive case, CMPR – comparative, CSL – causal case, CV_SIM – simultaneity converb (also used as a finite past tense form), EMPH – emphatic particle, GEN – genitive case, INF – infinitive, INS – instrumental case, LOC – locative case, NEG – negation, NPST – non-past tense, OBJ – objective case (accusative + dative), P_X – X person possessive, PC_PRS -- present tense participle, PC_RES – resultative participle, PL – plural number, POT – potential modality, PST – past tense, REFL – reflexive (also used as an anticausative), SG – singular number, VBZ – verbalizer.

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⁵ All the information about the consultants was collected by other participants of the Poshkart Chuvash fieldwork trip (NRU HSE), to whom I express my gratitude.

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