



# **Variation and Change in Endangered Languages (VACEL)**

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## **Book of abstracts**



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## Contents

|                                                                                                                                                                                |    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Timofey Arkhangelskiy. <i>Microvariation and its causes in Shamardan Beserman</i> .....                                                                                        | 4  |
| Kristina Balykova. <i>When more attrition means less simplification: The case of two Guató brothers</i> .                                                                      | 5  |
| Vlada Baranova. <i>Morphosyntactic patterns in revitalised Kalmyk</i> .....                                                                                                    | 7  |
| Aleksandra Belkind, Lena Borise, Katalin Gugán, Balazs Suranyi. <i>Post-verbal phrases in two Khanty dialects: The perimeters of Russian influence</i> .....                   | 8  |
| Bhavya C P, V. M. Subramanya Sharma. <i>The mystery of the dental lateral: Recovering a three-way contrast in Malavedan</i> .....                                              | 11 |
| Jeremy Bradley. <i>The competition of relativization strategies in Mari from an areal, diachronic, and sociolinguistic perspective</i> .....                                   | 13 |
| Maria Brykina, Josefina Budzisch. <i>Contact-Induced Syntactic Variation in Selkup Dialects</i> .....                                                                          | 14 |
| Anna Bugaeva. <i>Contact-Induced Narrative Innovation in Ainu: Code-Switching or Creative Adaptation of Discourse Markers?</i> .....                                           | 16 |
| Marcia Alejandra Castro Sepúlveda. <i>The Bovine Lexical Domain in Evenki: Structural Integration and Ethnosemantic Adaptation under Language Contact</i> .....                | 18 |
| Elwira Dexter-Sobkowiak. <i>The domino effect: How and why numeral classifiers are becoming obsolete in Mesoamerican languages</i> .....                                       | 19 |
| Eukene Franco-Landa. <i>Symbolic Tax or Dialectal Trait? The Social Cost of Ergative Omission</i> ....                                                                         | 23 |
| Azler Garcia-Palomino. <i>Less-frequent Basque speakers lead internally motivated innovations in Basque</i> .....                                                              | 24 |
| Rusudan Gersamia, Irina Lobzhanidze. <i>Structural Variation and Contact-Induced Change in Megrelian under Conditions of Language Shift</i> .....                              | 27 |
| Lenore A. Grenoble, Elena Nesterova, Boris Osipov. <i>Change, variation and emergent social meaning: Tense marking in Even</i> .....                                           | 29 |
| Ekaterina M. Gridneva. <i>Lexical variation in mixed languages: Doublets as a window into formation processes</i> .....                                                        | 32 |
| Ekaterina Gruzdeva. <i>Structural Vulnerability and Dynamics of Language Obsolescence (Plenary talk)</i> .....                                                                 | 37 |
| Kerry Hull. <i>Enregistering Authority under Language Shift: Ritual Language Change in Endangered Ch'orti' Maya</i> .....                                                      | 38 |
| Boglárka Janurik. <i>Variation in the use of numerals in Erzya–Russian bilingual discourse</i> .....                                                                           | 39 |
| Egor Kashkin, Daria Mordashova, Maria Emilia Winkler. <i>An endangered dialect at the crossroads of language interaction: The case of Tatyshly Udmurt</i> .....                | 41 |
| Olga Kazakevich. <i>Some outcomes of Itelmen–Russian contacts in the Northern Itelmen dialect</i> ....                                                                         | 44 |
| Zaira Khalilova. <i>Dialectal diversity through structural variation in Khwarshi</i> .....                                                                                     | 47 |
| Olga Lovick, Dagmar Jung, Zachary Morgan. <i>Intergenerational language change and fluency: An apparent-time corpus study of morphological innovation in Dëne Sųliné</i> ..... | 49 |
| Patrick Mächler, Anja Hasse. <i>Verbale vs. nominale Morphologie im Sprachkontakt: Das Fallbeispiel des modernen Älvdalischen</i> .....                                        | 51 |
| Igor Marchenko. <i>Contact-induced or Internally Driven? Phonetic Variation in Bildts</i> .....                                                                                | 53 |

|                                                                                                                                                                 |    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Akankshya Mishra. <i>Structural Innovation in Heritage Odia Adjectives under Telugu Contact: From Atomic aPs to CPs</i> .....                                   | 55 |
| Maria Morozova, Alexander Rusakov. <i>Language contact and language shift effects in endangered varieties of the Balkans</i> .....                              | 58 |
| Johannes G. Mücke. <i>Contact and Variation in Corfiot Italian: Contact-Induced Phenomena as Linguistic Variation in an Endangered Language</i> .....           | 60 |
| Alexander Artzelus Muxika, Irantzu Epelde Cendoya. <i>Language Variation in the Syntax of Basque allocutives</i> .....                                          | 63 |
| Claire Nance. <i>Acquiring a complex system in an endangered language: The intersection of child bilingualism, development, and language shift</i> .....        | 65 |
| Naomi Peck. <i>Variation and change in demonstrative determiners in Sümi: A corpus study</i> .....                                                              | 67 |
| Hendrik Pigola, Elisabeth Verhoeven. <i>Use of the progressive aspect marker with generic time reference in Yucatec Maya</i> .....                              | 69 |
| Polina Pleshak. <i>Congruent lexicalization in Moksha–Russian bilinguals</i> .....                                                                              | 71 |
| Fedor Rozhanskiy, Elena Markus. <i>Main patterns of variation in the Votic inflectional system</i> .....                                                        | 73 |
| Rita Rumboldt. <i>Variation and Change in Istriot: The Case of uni</i> .....                                                                                    | 75 |
| Caterina Saracco. <i>Italian language and Germanic minorities in the Western Alps: Linguistic erosion in the Walser community of Gressoney</i> .....            | 77 |
| Natalia Stoyanova. <i>The decay of nominal inflection types in language shift: A corpus-based study of Ulcha (Tungusic)</i> .....                               | 78 |
| Tuuli Tuisk, Anton Malmi, Claire Nance. <i>Livonian palatalization: Acoustic characteristics and realization across three generations</i> .....                 | 81 |
| Irati Urreta, Oroitz Jauregi. <i>Phonetic change and social meaning: Trill variation in Basque and the performative context of Libertimendua</i> .....          | 82 |
| Maria Usacheva. <i>The influence of listener's mother tongue and genre on choosing Beserman, Russian, and Udmurt language units: A corpus-based study</i> ..... | 83 |
| Kitti Vojter. <i>Indirect speech in the Enets languages</i> .....                                                                                               | 85 |
| Kathy Zaruba. <i>An exploration of morphosyntactic variation in Northeastern Neo-Aramaic Senaya</i>                                                             | 86 |
| Zhencao Zhong, Xiang Li. <i>Contact-induced changes of postverbal constructions in Western Yugur</i> .....                                                      | 88 |

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## Microvariation and its causes in Shamardan Beserman

Beserman (Permic < Uralic) is an endangered language spoken by around 2000 people, mostly in NW Udmurtia. It is closely related to Udmurt and apparently originated as a Southern Udmurt variety. However, the Besermans had resettled to the Northern Udmurt territory by the early 17<sup>th</sup> century at the latest (Popova 1998: 13–17). Since then, Beserman has been subject to various sociolinguistic processes, particularly:

- (1) mutual influence with the adjacent Northern Udmurt varieties, which resulted in Beserman being linguistically much closer to them now than to the Southern dialects;
- (2) influence of Standard Udmurt, which was taught in schools as the “native tongue” and is seen as more prestigious (since mid-20<sup>th</sup> century);
- (3) influence of the dominant Russian and subsequent language shift (all speakers bilingual now; no language transmission at all since the early 2000s).

Being a spoken, non-standardized language, Beserman exhibits significant variation, even within a single settlement. Some of it goes unnoticed by the speakers, while some is known to them and tends to be explained geographically (“that’s the way they speak in that street”). However, it is in fact not clear what causes it or how the variants are distributed. In my talk, I will focus on phonology, vocabulary (both form and semantics), morphology and syntax, trying to unravel the factors explaining variation in the village of Shamardan and several nearby villages.

I primarily use responses to a questionnaire with 17 questions, collected in 2021 from 28 respondents (male and female, born between 1944 and 1990). It is complemented by later questionnaires with fewer respondents and corpus data. My analysis suggests that different kinds of variation in Beserman stem from different factors. Importantly, intra-village variation is never geographically determined, contrary to what the speakers believe. Specifically,

- Phonological form of lexemes (e.g., *vel't'e* vs. *vel'te* walk.PRS.3SG, *gâne* vs. *gine* ‘only’) is mostly determined by the ongoing influence of the adjacent Udmurt variety;
- Semantics and lexical compatibility is partially connected to language attrition;
- Morphosyntax is affected by both Standard Udmurt and Russian (by pattern copying), or by language attrition (selection of more regular variants by younger respondents);
- However, some parts of morphology and syntax exhibit a high level of what seems to be inherent variation not conditioned by the sociolinguistic factors, e.g., the preference for one of the relativization strategies.

Finally, I’ll touch upon the perception of variation by the Beserman speakers.

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## **When more attrition means less simplification: The case of two Guató brothers**

Research on the structural change in endangered languages often relies on comprehensive descriptions and/or large data corpora made available when the language under study was more vital and more widely used. An example is Schmidt (1985), who often refers to Traditional Dyirbal paradigms documented by Dixon (1972) in order to characterize the structural change in Young People's Dyirbal. However, the lack or scarcity of previous materials makes such comparison virtually unfeasible or, at least, very limited for some languages, such as Guató, the language examined in this paper.

Guató is a critically endangered isolate from Brazil. It is currently remembered by only two elderly native speakers, Vicente and André, who are brothers and who no longer use the language in their daily lives. Before the author of this paper started researching Guató in 2017, it had only been minimally documented and described. Its grammatical structures received limited attention in Palácio (1984), the first linguistic description of the language. Thus, it is hard to determine whether and in what ways the Guató used by the extant speakers differs from the Guató spoken 40–50 years ago when there still was a language community.

What we can do is to compare the native language performance of the two brothers, given that they underwent different degrees of language attrition. Vicente is the eldest brother and ceased using Guató in daily life in 2011 when his mother passed away. He has worked as the author's language consultant since 2019. André is a few years younger and spent 35 years working in a remote cattle farm where there were no other Guató speakers. He retired in 2020 and has worked as the author's language consultant since then. Therefore, it is safe to assume that Vicente actively used Guató for a much longer period and underwent less language attrition, which is already perceptible in his more fluent speech with lesser hesitations and false starts, compared to André's.

However, interestingly, more attrition does not always mean more simplification in André's case. Sometimes, he produces more complex forms, which cannot be explained by calquing from Brazilian Portuguese or other external factors. One example is standard negation in past-tense sentences. While the past-tense marker *ga* behaves as a verbal suffix in affirmative sentences, it behaves as a particle preceding the verb in negative ones, as shown in (1) produced by Vicente. Note that the negative prefix *í-* only occurs on the verb in this example. In André's speech, however, the negative prefix *í-* consistently occurs on both the past-tense particle and the verb, as shown in (2). Another example is the remote past tense particle, which is *ké* in Vicente's speech, as shown in (3), and *kége* in André's, as shown in (4).

In the present paper, this and other cases of more complex forms in André's speech will be discussed. The cases will be analyzed with respect to two possible causes. The first one is the loss of fluency, which may prevent André from applying fast-speech reduction rules, resulting in fully articulated forms. The second one is that André's speech may demonstrate a "time-capsule" effect and preserve more conservative forms that have been simplified in the speech of his family members during the decades of his absence.

## Examples

- (1) *ké* *n-ánúnigũ-ga-io* *i-óka* *g<sup>w</sup>á-tó-k<sup>w</sup>óia*  
 REM.PST IPFV-work-PST-1SG 3SG-that.way LOCZ-AUG-be.distant  
 ‘I used to work far away,’  
*ga* *í-ánúnigũ-ru* *gíne* *g<sup>w</sup>á-t̥fóhegũ*  
 PST NEG-work-NEG.1SG here LOCZ-be.close  
 ‘I did not use to work close to here.’
- (2a) *í-ga* *í-gũ-ru* *óio* *g-égũtí*  
 NEG-PST NEG-sell-NEG.1SG PRO.1SG NM-fish  
 ‘I did not use to sell fish.’
- (2b) *í-ga* *í-gu* *go-íóviú*  
 NEG-PST NEG-exist NM-person  
 ‘There were no people.’
- (2c) *memé í-ga* *í-é-núna* *g-ot̥f̥é*  
 mom NEG-PST NEG-3SG-make NM-cotton  
 ‘Mom did not use to weave cotton.’
- (3) *a-gí-má-io* *g-íuri*  
 1SG-mother-NV.PST-1SG NM-snail.shell  
*ké* *n-ε-núná-ga* *go-gu*  
 REM.PST IPFV-3SG-make-PST NM-necklace  
 ‘My late mother used to make necklaces from snail shells.’
- (4) *a-d̥ž-éviú-má-io* *kége* *n-ánúnigũ-ga*  
 1SG-EP-wife-NV.PST-1SG REM.PST IPFV-work-PST  
*go-hi-óvu-d̥ž̥*  
 NM-LOC-house-master  
 ‘My late wife used to work at a cattle farm.’

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## **Morphosyntactic patterns in revitalised Kalmyk**

Kalmyk (Oirat) is a Mongolic language spoken in southern Russia. It is an agglutinative language with SOV word order. The dramatic history of the Kalmyk people in the 20th century led to a language shift; however, since the 1990s, and especially in recent decades, revitalization efforts have emerged.

In many revitalizing communities, the speech of new speakers displays particular features, such as lexical restrictions and contact-induced changes. The speech of new speakers is often highly variable (Rodríguez-Ordóñez et al. 2022), which leads to increased intra-community variation. This paper provides some preliminary observations on the language of young speakers who are trying to revive or learn their heritage language. It aims to identify some variables in comparison with traditional speakers.

This study analyzes the language of young Kalmyk speakers (ages 16–35), examining data from spoken texts collected during fieldwork with three young speakers. These speakers consider Kalmyk an important part of their identity and consciously try to improve their knowledge of the language, even though communication with their parents is limited due to the predominantly Russian-speaking environment among young families. They also study Kalmyk at school, and their proficiency is higher than that of other children their age. Although Russian is their dominant language, their Kalmyk proficiency is sufficient for participating in dialogues and telling monologic stories entirely in Kalmyk. The study also uses data from other “new speakers,” including stand-up comedy performances on Instagram and YouTube.

Preliminary analysis shows a tendency to avoid Russian borrowings and code-switching that are typical of the older generation, aligning with a broader trend among “new speakers” in other parts of the world to be more linguistically conservative (cf. young Maya speakers in Guatemala (Barrett 2008)). These texts also largely adhere to Kalmyk grammatical rules. At the same time, they differ from the spoken texts of “traditional” speakers in terms of narrative structure and the distribution of finite and non-finite forms. Traditional Kalmyk narratives mostly consist of chains of non-finite clauses (using converbs and participles) with fewer finite verbs (approximately 28% of the forms in the spoken corpus of traditional speakers are finite, whereas in the speech of new speakers this proportion rises to up to 44%).

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### **Post-verbal phrases in two Khanty dialects: The perimeters of Russian influence**

**Goals.** This talk compares the availability of post-verbal phrases in two dialects of Khanty, a severely endangered group of Ob-Ugric languages. While Khanty can be characterised typologically as a verb final OV language, it has been in intense contact with SVO Russian for many decades. As our analysis of corpus data shows, Surgut Khanty (SKh), a dialect of Eastern Khanty, and Kazym Khanty (KKh), a dialect of Northern Khanty differ with regard to the possible information structural status as well as the permitted range of grammatical functions of post-verbal phrases (see Asztalos et al. 2017 for a brief report on SKh). We propose that there may be a close connection between the latter two factors. Specifically, the permitted range of grammatical functions is more limited in SKh *because of* an information structural restriction on post-verbal constituents in this dialect, which is absent from KKh.

**Data.** We sourced a dedicated database of 118 declarative clauses containing post-verbal phrases from a database of spoken SKh tales and dialogues collected by Schön between 2010 and 2016 (Schön 2024). Similarly, we built a database of 162 declarative clauses containing post-verbal phrases from Western Khanty Corpus (Kaškin & Muraviev 2014). We excluded afterthoughts, defined as prosodically separate and having a(n overt or silent) pronominal or other associate in the pre-verbal field. The grammatical function of post-verbal phrases was labeled as in Table (1). ('Targets' include purpose infinitives, goals of motion, and detachable directional preverbs, see Haig et al. 2024 for this category). Their information structural status was tagged in terms of Prince (1981) and Hearer-Old/New and Discourse-Old/New.

**Post-verbal phrases in Surgut Khanty.** The distribution of the grammatical function of post-verbal phrases in SKh, shown in Table (1), reveals the striking (near) absence of post-verbal objects. Regarding information status, the post-verbal core arguments are almost exclusively Discourse- and Hearer-Old; cf. Table (2). We suggest that the post-verbal domain in SKh is, by default, associated with discourse-nonprominence and favours phrases that are given and backgrounded (like in Turkish, e.g., Öztürk 2013). We propose that ultimately this is the reason for the strikingly low number of objects as post-verbal constituents. Specifically, the object role is bundled with new/focal status in the absence of agreement on the verb and with secondary aboutness topic status in the presence of agreement (Nikolaeva 1999, 2001). Both of these are discourse-prominent statuses, hence incompatible with the nonprominence of pure givenness backgrounding associated with the post-verbal field. As the (primary) aboutness topic status of subjects is bundled with the canonical, pre-verbal subject position (É. Kiss 2019), rather than with agreement on the verb, they can be placed postverbally, where they are merely given/backgrounded. This prediction is borne out and explains the frequency of passivisation for the sake of post-verbal theme-backgrounding in SKh (1). When the theme becomes a subject, the backgrounded *by*-phrase can surface as a PVC (2). (Targets, which are typically not given, require an independent explanation; for a cognitive-functional account, see Haig 2022). In short, despite intensive contact with SVO Russian, SKh limits the range of post-verbal phrases, which may be ultimately motivated by an information structural restriction on its post-verbal field.

**Post-verbal phrases in Kazym Khanty.** In contrast to SKh, post-verbal phrases in KKh show no restriction on grammatical function. Strikingly, there is a significant number of post-verbal objects (1), (Table 1). Moreover, there are almost equal numbers of agreeing and non-agreeing objects in the post-verbal position. This suggests that post-verbal position in KKh is not limited in terms of information structural roles. Indeed, as Table (3) shows for direct objects, new/focal, as well as given/backgrounded elements are found post-verbally.

**Limits of Russian influence.** Even though SVO Russian has been a sociolinguistically dominant contact language, the post-verbal occurrence of phrases in typologically verb-final Khanty dialects shows divergences from Russian. SKh shows a restriction on post-verbal objects. KKh also shows divergences from Russian. First, in KKh, the theme argument in clauses with secundative alignment is attested post-verbally (1). Secundative alignment is not part of the Russian grammar, so (1) cannot be treated as a surface copying of a Russian word order pattern. Furthermore, the same post-verbal positioning of a phrase in KKh and Russian may require different configurations of information structural roles. In the KKh example (3a), the post-verbal element is new/narrowly focused, while the pre-verbal subject and indirect object are part of the background. The identical word order in Russian (3b) requires narrow focus on the preverbal IO, i.e. it is unavailable in the same context. In short, although Russian has been a sociolinguistically dominant contact language, the post-verbal occurrence of phrases in typologically verb-final Khanty dialects exhibits autonomous properties and therefore cannot be ascribed altogether to simple surface pattern borrowing.

Table 1. Grammatical functions of post-verbal phrases

|     | Subjects, active clauses | Subjects, passive clauses | by-phrases, passive clauses | Direct objects, agreeing | Direct objects, non-agreeing | Oblique theme, secundative alignment | Targets | Adjuncts (locative, temporal, manner) |
|-----|--------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------|---------------------------------------|
| SKh | 14                       | 10                        | 7                           | 1                        | -                            | -                                    | 26      | 60                                    |
| KKh | 32                       | 5                         | 5                           | 14                       | 14                           | 1                                    | 33      | 43                                    |

Table 2. Discourse roles of post-verbal objects (SKh)

|    | DN | DO |
|----|----|----|
| HN | 6  | 0  |
| HO | 0  | 26 |

Table 3. Discourse roles of post-verbal objects (KKh)

|    | DN | DO |
|----|----|----|
| HN | 8  | 4  |
| HO | 0  | 15 |

(1) (You will see a cup with blood in the drawer.)

*Mæ:nə noq ji:n'wəyti βərat.*  
 1SG.LOC up drink.PST.PASS.3SG blood.3SG  
 'I have drunk her blood.' (SKh)

(2) (What happened to your eye?)

*Tu:tən i:lə paβləmi nuynə.*  
 then out poke.PST.PASS.3SG 2SG.LOC  
 'You poked [it] out then.' (SKh)

(3) *śalta in ike -l-ən pa*  
 then this man-POSS.3SG-LOCADD  
*mă -s-i i kuštəl sərñi wox-ən*  
 give-PST-PASS one handful gold money-LOC  
 ‘Then he gave her again a handful of gold coins...’ (KKh)

(4) Context: He [Mosh-the-mighty, dressed as a merchant] began to ask this woman to give him her son, offering her a lot of money, gold, and goods. The woman hesitated for a long time, but then sold her son to the merchant.

a. *məś pəxatur imi-j-a mă-s*  
 Mosh warrior.[NOM] woman-STEM-DAT give-PST.[3SG]

*[ar sərñi wox]*<sub>FOC</sub>  
 many gold money.[ACC]

‘Mosh-the-mighty gave the woman [a great deal of gold and money]<sub>FOC</sub> [took her son, and went back.]’ (KKh, WKHC)

b. #Mosh bogatyr’ [ženščine]<sub>FOC</sub> dal  
 Mosh warrior.NOM woman.DAT give.PST.M  
*mnogo zolotykh monet...*  
 many.ACC gold.PL.GEN money.PL.GEN

‘Mosh-the-mighty gave [the woman]<sub>FOC</sub> a great deal of gold and money...’

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### **The mystery of the dental lateral: Recovering a three-way contrast in Malavedan**

The Malavedan language is a severely endangered Dravidian variety spoken in the Kollam, Kottayam and Pathanamthitta districts of Kerala, India (Eberhard et al., 2025). For nearly half a century, the phonetic inventory of Malavedan has remained a subject of academic contradiction. Kumari's (1977) syntactic analysis was the first to flag a 'peculiar' lateral sound, listing lexical items that hinted at a non-standard articulation. Beegum's (1991) subsequent doctoral dissertation erased this sound entirely, offering a phonemic inventory that mirrored Standard Malayalam and ignoring the dental variance. A decade later, Kumar (2002) reintroduced a dental lateral into the inventory, yet his description misidentified the dental *toḷḷu* ('fire') as retroflex, and failed to account for the gemination constraints that govern its distribution. Most recently, a volume published by the Kerala Institute for Research Training and Development Studies of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes returned to the omission narrative, likely owing to a lack of specialised linguistic focus (Kumar et al., 2023).

While the dominant contact language, Malayalam, and other major Dravidian literary languages operate on a two-way lateral distinction (alveolar /l/ and retroflex /ɭ/), Malavedan appears to harbour a third, marked lateral: the dental /ɭ̪/. Malayalam maintains a three-way coronal contrast in its stops (/t̪/, /t/, /t̪/) and nasals (/ɲ̪/, /n/, /ɲ/) but lacks it in its laterals. Malavedan therefore preserves, or has innovated, a system that aligns its laterals with its stops and nasals, recalling the unusually dense lateral inventories attested elsewhere in the family, most notably in Toda (Emeneau, 1984). Drawing on primary fieldwork conducted across five settlements in the Ranni block of Pathanamthitta district in 2025, this study documents the dental lateral in a corpus elicited from fluent native speakers, and shows that it is restricted to geminated, word-medial position in a small set of conservative roots, among them /kaḷḷə/ ('to bite') and /toḷḷə/ ('fire'). Instrumental analysis of this corpus is currently in progress, following the established acoustic parameters for coronal place in Dravidian: the second formant as the correlate of laminal versus apical contact (Jongman et al., 1985), and third formant lowering as the correlate of retroflexion (Ladefoged & Bhaskararao, 1983). The paper argues that the dental lateral is neither an allophonic variant nor an articulatory error on the part of older speakers, but a segment systematically unheard by fieldworkers whose perceptual expectations were trained on the binary lateral system of the dominant contact language. Identifying such segments is a necessary step in recognising the true complexity of endangered Dravidian speech.

#### **Keywords**

Malavedan, Malayalam, Endangered Language, Phonetics, Phonology, Dravidian

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## The competition of relativization strategies in Mari from an areal, diachronic, and sociolinguistic perspective

Two relativization strategies can be found in Mari, a set of Uralic languages spoken in the Volga Region: a non-finite participial strategy (*kolâšt-mo mut* hear-PTCP.PASS word ‘heard word’, Riese et al. 2017: 367) and a finite strategy using a relative pronoun (e.g. *mut, kudâ-m kolâšt-ât* word, which-ACC hear-3PL ‘word, that (they) hear’, *ibid.*). As shown in Shagal (2023), the broad contextual orientation of participles allows for not only the relativization of a subject or direct object, but also e.g. of a locative argument, making relativization via participles highly versatile. This situation is reminiscent of that in neighbouring Turkic and Uralic languages; relative pronoun-introduced finite relative clauses are not inherited in these languages but rather are a relatively recent innovation which spread from Standard Average European (Comrie 1998: 61).

Nevertheless, relative pronouns do occur in Mari, more or less frequently, subject to linguistic and conditioned by extralinguistic factors, as described in Aralova & Brykina (2012). Pronominal structures oftentimes go unmentioned in grammars or are actively proscribed (Riese et al. 2017: 367) or described as admissible primarily in correlatives (**He** *who does not work, neither shall he eat*; cf. Shagal 2023: 948–950).

This talk will present a diachronic survey of the competition between these strategies based on translations into Mari from the 19<sup>th</sup> century until today, especially from Russian, a language making wide use of pronoun-induced relative clauses. It will show that often, Mari translators would utilize neither of the structures detailed above and instead decompose complex clauses into more atomistic structures using asyndetic links. It will present hypotheses on which sociolinguistic and language political factors might have motivated the usage of these three structures (participle ~ pronoun ~ asyndeton) in different historical time periods and especially investigate the role of literacy in these developments.

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### Contact-Induced Syntactic Variation in Selkup Dialects

Selkup, an endangered Samoyedic language of Western Siberia, exhibits substantial dialectal diversity and a long history of contact with Russian (Kazakevich 2007: 20). Since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Russian expansion along the Ob' river system has shaped the sociolinguistic ecology of the Selkup-speaking area. While some Selkup groups migrated northwards toward the Taz and Yenisei basins and remained relatively isolated, others continued to live along the Ob', where sustained interaction with Russian settlers, administration, and trade networks led to intense and prolonged bilingualism. These historically different contact trajectories are reflected in strongly asymmetrical patterns of Russian influence across Selkup dialects. Northern Selkup shows comparatively limited borrowing, whereas Central and Southern varieties display extensive integration of Russian elements, including functional and grammatical items.

This study investigates how these differences in contact intensity correlate with syntactic variation across Selkup dialects. The analysis is based on corpus data from the INEL Selkup Corpus (Brykina et al. 2021) and explores several domains of variation that illustrate potential contact-induced changes.

Selkup is typologically a head-final SOV language, yet corpus data reveal dialectal differences in clause organization and an increasing occurrence of structures resembling Russian (SVO) patterns, particularly in dialects with a stronger history of contact. Contact influence is also visible in coordination and clause linking strategies. While conjunctive coordination in Selkup is traditionally expressed through juxtaposition or by means of the native coordinator *aj* 'and', corpus data show the productive use of Russian loan conjunctions, most prominently *i* 'and' and less frequently *da* 'and'. These borrowed coordinators occur in finite clause coordination and are particularly frequent in the Southern dialects, where coordinative conjunctions occur in roughly 14–15% of utterances, compared to only about 2% in Northern and Central varieties (Behnke & Budzisch 2024: 354–355). Subordinate clauses in Selkup also make use of Russian conjunctions (such as *čto* 'that', *čtoby* 'in order to', *jesli* 'if'), although these are used less frequently.

Another domain of variation involves non-finite clause constructions. In Selkup, two main strategies are used to mark the verb expressing purpose: the general converb *-lä* and the infinitive *-qo*. Northern Selkup strongly favors converbial constructions, whereas Central, Southern, and Ket dialects predominantly employ infinitival constructions (Behnke & Budzisch 2023: 138–143). This distribution may reflect the influence of Russian, where infinitives are commonly used to encode purpose. Finally, the dialectal distribution and functions of borrowed Russian elements such as *wes* 'all' and *mol* 'it is said' further illustrate variation in clause structuring and narrative organization across dialects.

Taken together, these case studies demonstrate that syntactic variation in Selkup dialects cannot be explained solely by internal dialect differentiation. Instead, the data point to a strong interaction between dialect structure and historically conditioned contact intensity with Russian.

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## Contact-Induced Narrative Innovation in Ainu: Code-Switching or Creative Adaptation of Discourse Markers?

Ainu (isolate, almost extinct), originally spoken in Hokkaido, the Kuril Islands, and southern Sakhalin, is famous for its rich folklore, which comprises at least two metrical melodic genres—*yukar* ‘heroic epics’ and *kamuy yukar* ‘divine epics’—and one prosaic genre, *uwepeker* ‘prosaic folktales’. Although Ainu folklore is well documented, relatively little research has been conducted on its narrative structure. Moreover, in the context of language endangerment, this aspect has likely also been influenced by contact with Japanese as the dominant language.

The present study examines the structure of the episode in prose, which is defined as a narrative unit of events or actions characterized by thematic breaks in space, time, character configuration, event structure, or even world (S. Ji 2002). Since episodes represent distinct temporal sequences and transitions, they are cross-linguistically encoded by preposed subordinate clauses of time introduced by temporal conjunctions. Ainu is no exception, using native conjunctions such as *ora*, *orano*, *oraun* ‘then, meanwhile’, *okake ta* ‘afterward’, or adverbs such as *isimne* ‘the next day’ and *tewano* (*anak*) ‘from now on’ etc.

However, in Hokkaido Ainu—where contact with Japanese was strongest—the description of new scenes within an episode is often introduced by the Japanese loanword discourse marker *konto* (< *kondo*) ‘next, then’ (1). Another Japanese loanword, *sorekusu* (< *sore koso*) ‘that’s what, exactly’, points to an elaboration within an episode and serves to capture the listener’s attention (2). Moreover, *sorekusu*, often signaling the onset of a quote, may recur in succession, especially as narrative tension builds toward the climax of the story (2). More dynamic and dramatic stories tend to feature a higher frequency of *sorekusu*, underscoring its function in enhancing the dramatic effect. This function is not observed in the original Japanese expression *sore koso* ‘that’s what, exactly’.

According to Tamura (1996: 677), *sorekusu* corresponds to the Ainu equivalent *easir* ‘exactly’. However, in *A Glossed Audio Corpus of Ainu Folklore* (Nakagawa et al. 2026–2021) (59,002 words), *sorekusu* occurs 463 times, while the native Ainu equivalent *easir* occurs only 38 times. This suggests that what began as simple code-switching has creatively evolved into a new discourse marker that is gradually replacing the original one and extending its functions.

### Examples

- (1) *konto*, [arpa-an      wa      hat      punker a-tuy-e      wa      ek-an  
next go.SG-4.S      and      grape vine 4.A-cut-TR.SG      and      come.SG-4.S  
  
yak      pirka,] sekor kane  
COMP good QUOT something.like

‘Next, “You may (lit. ‘it is good if’) go out and cut grapevine.” she said something like that.’ (Nakagawa et al. 2016–2021: K7803233UP.054–056)

- (2) [*sorekusu*      e-wen-kar      ne      ya      ki  
exactly      2SG.A-bad-make      COP      Q      do  
  
wa      ene      kamuy or  
and      like.this      god      place

|                                      |                                 |                                |                           |                          |                      |                            |                            |                           |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| <i>ta</i><br>LOC                     | <i>i-ki</i><br>ANTIP-do         | <i>pe</i><br>NMLZ              | <i>an</i><br>exist.SG     | <i>hi</i><br>NMLZ        |                      |                            |                            |                           |
| <i>e-nukar</i><br>2SG.A-see          | <i>sorekusu</i><br>exactly      | <i>nep</i><br>what             | <i>siyeye</i><br>sickness |                          |                      |                            |                            |                           |
| <i>oka</i><br>exist.PL               | <i>yak</i><br>if                | <i>e-eramuan</i><br>2SG.A-know | <i>wa</i><br>and          | <i>e-ye</i><br>2SG.A-say | <i>yakne</i><br>when | <i>sorekusu</i><br>exactly |                            |                           |
| <i>e-ona-ha</i><br>2SG.A-father-POSS | <i>sorekusu</i><br>exactly      |                                |                           |                          |                      |                            |                            |                           |
| <i>potara</i><br>treat.sickness      | <i>ne</i><br>COP                | <i>ya</i><br>Q                 | <i>nen</i><br>what        | <i>nen</i><br>what       | <i>ki</i><br>do      | <i>yakne</i><br>when       | <i>sorekusu</i><br>exactly | <i>pak-no</i><br>till-ADV |
| <i>nispa</i><br>rich.man             | <i>isam</i><br>not.exist        | <i>nispa</i><br>rich.man       | <i>e-ne</i><br>2SG.A-COP  | <i>p</i><br>NMLZ         |                      |                            |                            |                           |
| <i>ne</i><br>COP                     | <i>ruwe</i><br>INFR.EV          | <i>ne</i><br>COP               | <i>na...</i><br>FIN       |                          |                      |                            |                            |                           |
| <i>nen</i><br>as                     | <i>e-i-ki</i><br>2SG.S-ANTIP-do | <i>p</i><br>NMLZ               | <i>ne</i><br>COP          | <i>na.]</i><br>FIN       | <i>sekor</i><br>QUOT |                            |                            |                           |

“SOREKUSU\_If some difficulty arises, you will be able to see the situation in the world of gods. SOREKUSU\_No matter what sort of sickness arises you will understand. So, SOREKUSU\_if you tell that and your father SOREKUSU\_performs a purification ritual, SOREKUSU\_you will become a person with unequalled wealth and power... So do what I say.” (He) said that.’ (Nakagawa et al. 2016–2021: K8303243UP.149–167)

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## **The Bovine Lexical Domain in Evenki: Structural Integration and Ethnosemantic Adaptation under Language Contact**

The Evenki language, historically organized around reindeer pastoralism, exhibits a comparatively secondary bovine lexical domain shaped by regional contact. From an ethnosemantic perspective, the study of how communities label and classify cultural and environmental phenomena, this domain offers a strategic vantage point for examining how cattle are conceptualized within a system traditionally centered on reindeer. Terminology related to cattle reveals marked etymological and dialectal stratification: forms such as *mačale* coexist with borrowings of Mongolic origin (*gunan* ‘three-year-old calf’, *kahirik* ‘two-year-old calf’, *donužin* ‘four-year-old cow’, *čar* ‘castrated ox’) and Yakut origin (*inak* ‘cow’; *oyus* ~ *eyus* ‘bull’), among others. This layered composition raises a central question: are these elements merely instances of contact-induced lexical borrowing, or do they signal deeper processes of conceptual reorganization associated with language shift?

The analysis focuses on the phonological and morphological integration of these terms, their dialectal distribution, and their incorporation into the Evenki classificatory framework. It evaluates whether distinctions of age, sex, and function replicate structural principles inherited from the reindeer domain or introduce externally derived taxonomic patterns. The evidence indicates that borrowed forms undergo systematic adaptation to Evenki phonology and morphosyntax, while the internal organization of the bovine domain aligns with pre-existing classificatory models. The study argues that the adoption of cattle terminology represents a process of lexically expansive yet structurally coherent development rather than systemic restructuring. The bovine domain thus serves as a diagnostic field for assessing the interaction between contact, variation, and conceptual continuity in a linguistically vulnerable context.

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## **The domino effect: How and why numeral classifiers are becoming obsolete in Mesoamerican languages**

Numeral classifiers (NCs), an areal feature traditionally found in the majority of language families of the Mesoamerican linguistic area (MLA; Campbell et al. 1986: 550), are falling out of use as a result of contact with Spanish, which does not have NCs. In this cross-linguistic study, I assess language change regarding NCs in colonial and modern MLA languages belonging to four language families (Mayan, Totonacan, Mixe-Zoquean, Uto-Aztecan), as well as in Purépecha (isolate). By comparing traditional with colonial and modern varieties of MLA languages, I trace the changes in quantifying nominal phrases and I show how these changes follow similar patterns in different languages. I argue that the loss of NCs can be interrelated with other Spanish contact-induced changes, including use of plural marking and borrowing of Spanish numerals.

In MLA languages, sortal NCs traditionally were used in quantifying nominal phrases, usually affixed to numerals, and indicated different properties of counted nouns which appeared in singular form. The range of NCs used varied from language to language, but among the most frequently indexed classes were: animacy, humanness, or shape (see ex. 1 from Purépecha). However, since the onset of contact with Spanish, a language that does not use NCs and allows the use of nouns in plural form in quantifying constructions, NCs have been gradually becoming an obsolete feature in MLA languages. The type of diachronic changes affecting this trait range from the overall simplification of the inventory of NCs in some languages to their complete eradication in other MLA languages. For example, many languages, including Yucatec (Martínez Corripio 2003: 85), Popoluca de Texistepec (Wichman 2007), Misantla Totonac (McKay 1999: 397) and Huehuetla Tepehua (Kung 2007), have evolved a generic cardinality NC to replace specific classifiers (see ex. 2). Another frequently attested phenomenon, observed in e.g. Huehuetla Tepehua (Kung 2007: 187), Yucatec (Blaha Pfeiler & Skopeteas 2024), Q'anjob'al (Mateo Pedro 2022: 3), and Ch'ol (Bale et al. 2019: 10), is the employment of NCs only with native numerals, which in most languages are now used only for very low numerals, i.e. up to 5 or less (see ex. 3). Moreover, in many languages NCs have become unproductive even in case of quantifying phrases with native numerals, as attested in Purépecha (Vázquez Rojas 2012: 89), Yucatec (Lehmann 2020: 807), and Ch'ol (Bale and Coon 2014). Another innovation involves the use of an NC alongside a plural form of a noun, as documented in Classical Nahuatl (see ex. 4). In varieties of modern Nahuatl, NCs have been completely abandoned (Jensen 2008), and quantifying nominal phrases consist of a bare numeral and a noun with respective numeral marking (see ex. 5). In Huasteca Nahuatl and Yucatec, some NCs have been reinterpreted as free-standing forms and are used as nouns (e.g. the former NC *tlamantli* 'thing' in Nahuatl and *kin* 'day' in Yucatec [Whalen 2003: 331], as shown in ex. 6).

This study demonstrates that the gradual loss of NCs in MLA languages is closely interconnected with other language change phenomena attested in quantifying phrases, in particular borrowing of Spanish numerals and use of plural forms of nouns. All of these changes result in restructuring of native Mesoamerican quantifying phrases (usually of the formula NUMERAL-NC<sub>CLASS</sub> NOUN<sub>CLASS</sub>[SG]) so that it resembles the Spanish formula NUMERAL NOUN[SG/PL]. Loss of NCs may have occurred because they do not fit the Spanish-based template grammar that has been evolving across many Mesoamerican languages as a result of widespread bilingualism and the adoption of Spanish patterns of linguistic expression. Further research

should address the chronology of language change, and also possible synchronic variation in the formation of quantifying nominal phrases in the languages of not only the MLA but also other languages of Hispanic America (e.g. Chibchan) that traditionally used NCs.

## Examples

### (1) NCs in Purépecha (Vázquez Rojas 2012: 86)

- a. *tsimáni*      ***ichúkwa***      *siranda*  
two              CL.FLAT      paper  
'two sheets of paper'
- b. *tanimu*      ***erhákwa***      *t'astsîni*      *tsípiti*  
three           CL.ROUND      bean           raw  
'three raw beans'
- c. (Vázquez Rojas 2012: 88)  
*tanimu* ***ichákwa***      *chkari*  
three CL.LONG      wood  
'three logs'

### (2) Use of NC for animate nouns (a) and plants (b), and use of the generic NC (c, d) in Yucatec (Blaha Pfeiler & Skopeteas 2024: 4–5)

- a. *jun-\*(túul)* *k'éek'en*  
one-CL.ANIM      pig  
'one pig'
- b. *jun-\*(kúul)* *che'*  
one-CL.PLANT      tree  
'one tree'
- c. *jum-\*(p'éel)*      *k'éek'en*  
one-CL.UNIT      pig  
'one pig' (in Western varieties)
- d. *jum-\*(p'éel)*      *che'*  
one-CL.UNIT      tree  
'one tree'

### (3) Obligatory use of the generic NC with native numeral (a), and absence of NC in a phrase with a Spanish numeral (b) in Ch'ol (Bale and Coon 2014) [glosses modified]

- a. *ux-\*(p'ej)*      *tyumuty*  
three-CL      egg  
'three eggs'

b. *nuebe-(\*)p'ej)*      *tyumuty*  
 nine[Spanish]-(\*CL)   egg  
 ‘nine eggs’

- (4) NC *tetl* used in a quantifying phrase with a noun in plural form in a 16th century will in Classical Nahuatl (Olko et al. 2018: 481) [glosses modified]

*nauh-tetl*      *yn*      *tlapan-cal-tin*  
 four-CL      SR      flat\_roof-house-ABS.PL  
 ‘four flat-roofed houses’

- (5) Quantifying phrase without a NC and with noun in a singular form (a) and in a plural form (b) in Nahuatl (Olko et al. 2018: 479)

a. *ome cal-li*  
 two      building-ABS.SG  
 ‘two buildings’

b. *ome cal-meh*  
 two      building-ABS.PL  
 ‘two buildings’

- (6) Form *kin* used as a NC (a) and as a free-standing noun (b) in Colonial Yucatec (Whalen 2003: 254, 331) [glosses modified]

a. *hun-kin*  
 one-CL.DAY  
 ‘one day’

b. *hun-ppel*      *kin*  
 one-CL.GENERAL      day  
 ‘one day’

## Abbreviations

ABS — absolutive; CL — numeral classifier; ex. — example; NC — numeral classifier; MLA — Mesoamerican linguistic area; OBJ — object; PL — plural; SG — singular; SR — subordinator

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## **Symbolic Tax or Dialectal Trait? The Social Cost of Ergative Omission**

Linguistic variation in endangered languages is often analyzed as a structural byproduct of contact or acquisition. However, following Messing (2007)—building on Gal (1979) and Kulick (1992)—variation is a fundamentally social process driven by how speakers reevaluate their identities. This study examines the Basque nominal ergative marker (-k) as a symbolic site where ideologies of legitimacy are contested (Rodríguez-Ordóñez, 2019, 2022). The feature is highly salient because it is absent in contact hegemonic languages (Spanish/French; English in the US diaspora), leading to cognitive competition (Austin, 2007). In the community, its omission is systematically associated with non-nativeness and a lack of proficiency. While -k has been studied in cognitive and sociolinguistic terms, its role as an ideological site remains under-researched despite the “collective paranoia” surrounding its perceived loss (Gondra et al., 2024).

Adopting a mixed-methods approach, this study analyzes 1,801 tokens from interviews with 40 participants in the Basque Country and Boise, USA. It investigates how different acquisition trajectories (L1, early L2, Heritage) interact with operationalized ideological stances, such as self-perceived nativeness and speaker categorization (traditional vs. new speakerness). Quantitative results reveal a proficiency continuum where ideological alignment can override acquisition type. Applying Irvine and Gal’s (2000) semiotic framework, we model how -k is doubly indexed: as ancestral authenticity grounded in Mother-Tongue Ideology (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1989) and institutional “correctness” shaped by Standard Language Ideology (Milroy & Milroy, 1999). In the homeland, this leads to peer surveillance and policing, creating a paradox of erasure for speakers lacking either ancestry or schooling. Conversely, while the US diaspora often functions as a “sanctuary,” transnational contact and education act as channels that reactivate these ideologies. This transforms the ergative into a litmus test for speakerhood even in heritage contexts. In sum, structural change is shown to be inextricably tied to the social negotiation of belonging.

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## **Less-frequent Basque speakers lead internally motivated innovations in Basque**

While the degree of language contact has traditionally been used in variationist sociolinguistics to measure contact-induced variation, very little is known about how reduced use of a language correlates with increasing rates of adoption of internally motivated innovations, particularly in Basque. Artzelus (2021) proposes that Basque speakers, especially the youth, tend to adopt new variants when they also use Basque less often. This is assumed to be the case because of their higher exposure to both Standard Basque and French/Spanish, the major sources of innovation importation nowadays. However, no attempt has been made to put his claims to the test by investigating internally motivated innovations that are independent of convergence with Standard Basque or French/Spanish. To fill that gap, this study looks at two such variables: the initial consonant of bipersonal absolutive-dative auxiliary verbs –(d) vs (y)– and the presence of an internal consonant in bipersonal absolutive-dative auxiliary verbs with first-person datives arguments –(s) vs (0)–. Both (d) and (s) variants seem to have emerged by analogy with more frequent forms in the present-tense verbal paradigm, and have been diffusing rapidly from North-Western Biscay since at least the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Euskaltzaindia n.d.). As such, three hypotheses emerge: 1) the degree of contact with Basque has no effect on innovation adoption; 2) those with greater contact with Basque will promote innovations purely because of density of contact and convergence trends (Bloomfield 1933); and 3) those with lesser contact with Basque will promote innovations (Ravindranath 2015; Silva-Corvalán 1986) arguably due to weaker ties with the local conservative norm, and perhaps, weaker exposure to less frequent parts in the verbal paradigm. The data presented here come from nearly one-hour-long semi-guided interviews conducted with 42 Basque natives from Larrabetzu in 2021–2023. The speakers were born between 1937–2001, and the sample was balanced for sex and socioeconomic factors. After answering a series of topic-specific modules to elicit relatively spontaneous speech, all speakers completed a storytelling task to elicit more monitored speech. Besides, speakers answered several questionnaire items to measure their use of Basque in a variety of domains, and were then categorised into two contact groups: speakers who report using Basque above 80% of the time and speakers who report using Basque below or equal to 80% of the time. 469 tokens were extracted for initial (d) vs (y), and 303 for internal (s) vs (0). The statistical analysis was conducted by fitting two generalised hierarchical mixed models using the R (R Core Team 2025) package *brms* (Bürkner 2017), one for each variable. Model specification is very similar in both cases: the two assume that the probability of producing the response variable comes from Bernoulli trials, where the outcome varies as a function of speakers' year of birth in interaction with categorical contact groups and verb tense –present and past–. Group-level adjustments were included for lexical verb, task, and contact group of each speaker by verb tense. Our findings provide support for the hypothesis that speakers who use Basque less frequently will be more prone to language-internally motivated innovation (see hypothesis 3 above), as shown in Figures 1 and 2 below. Assuming relatively stable rates of Basque use across the lifespan after adolescence (as suggested by large-scale findings in Altuna et al. 2022), we may conclude that speakers who report using Basque below or equal to 80% of the time were the first to adopt (d) in present tenses amongst speakers born in the late 30s and early 40s. Stronger adopters of (s) are also less frequent users of Basque, though innovation adoption takes off in speakers born in the 80s. Past tenses do not seem to be affected by contact group, probably due to language-internal pressures operating mostly in present tenses. These results suggest that greater reported use of Basque correlates with greater adherence to conservative community norms or resistance to internally motivated language forms that are diffusing rapidly across the region. This opens up new

avenues to further explore the effects of language contact in variationist sociolinguistics not only to account for contact-induced variation, but also to explain what role language use plays in both promoting language innovation and favouring more or less frequent forms within the system.

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## Figures

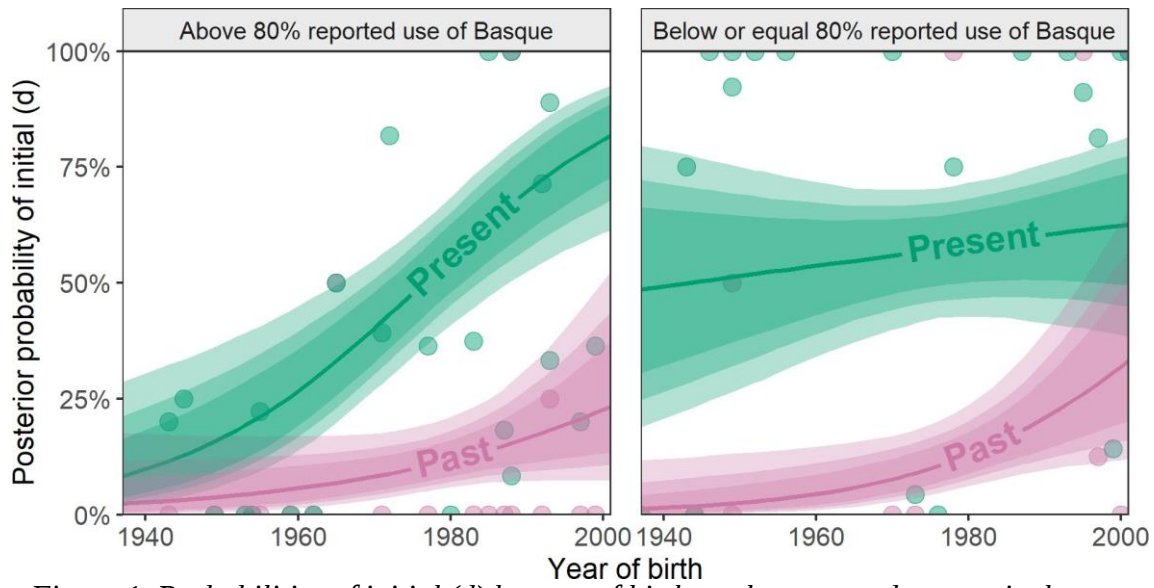


Figure 1. Probabilities of initial (d) by year of birth, verb tense, and categorical contact group

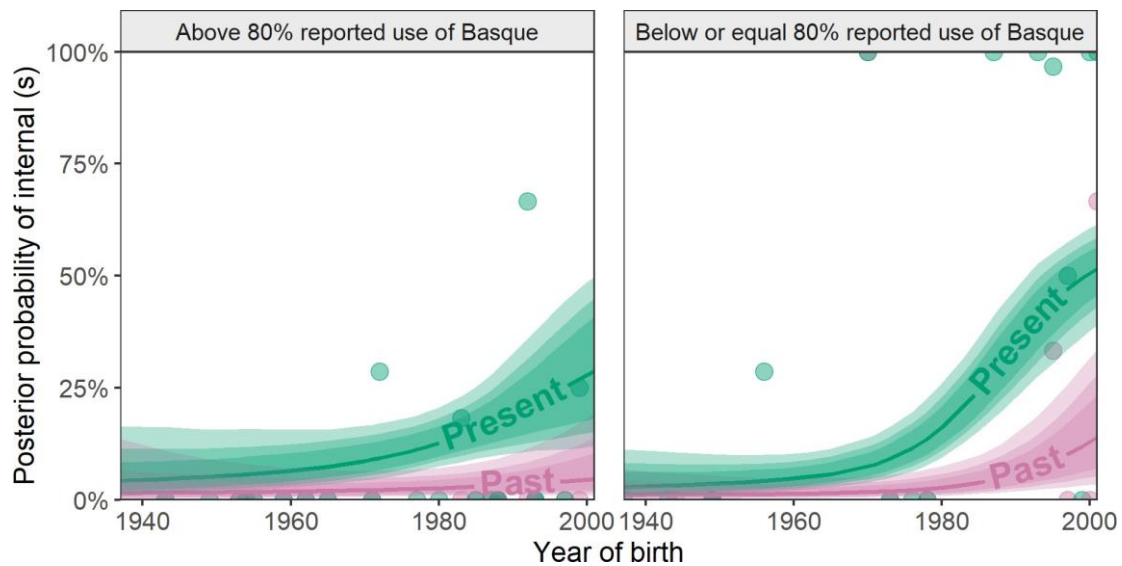


Figure 2. Probabilities of internal (s) by year of birth, verb tense, and categorical contact group

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## **Structural Variation and Contact-Induced Change in Megrelian under Conditions of Language Shift**

Megrelian (Kartvelian; western Georgia) is spoken in a long-standing bilingual connection with Georgian, the dominant state language. Classified by UNESCO (2021) as "increasingly endangered", Megrelian is experiencing weakened intergenerational transmission, particularly in urban communities where younger speakers are increasingly Georgian-dominant bilinguals. At the same time, it remains a strong marker of regional identity, creating a sociolinguistic context in which language maintenance and language shift coexist. Adopting a variationist perspective, this paper examines how Georgian linguistic material is incorporated into contemporary Megrelian and how contact-induced variation reflects ongoing language shift.

The analysis is based on conversational and narrative recordings collected during a language documentation project in Samegrelo (2021–2025). Participants were invited to speak Megrelian, but received no instructions concerning lexical choice or code-switching, and the linguistic aims of the project were not disclosed in order to minimize observer effects. The Megrelian language corpus (MLC) therefore represents naturally occurring bilingual speech.

The paper investigates (i) insertional and clause-level code-switching, (ii) structural constraints on verbal borrowing, and (iii) the morphosyntactic integration of Georgian lexical material into Megrelian.

- i. *a-grďzel-en-s*  
apll-long:l2-ts-subj2sg  
'keep going'
- ii. *gv-i-q'v-eb-u-u-d-u*  
**O1pl:l2-appl-naratte:l2-ts:l2-pass-ts-impf-subj3sg**  
'narrated'
- iii. *a-tm-a-b-y-nifn-en-k*  
prv-impfv-prv:l2-sub1-prv:l2-celebrate:L2-ts-subj1sg  
'I will mark'

Preliminary analysis shows that insertional code-switching predominates. Georgian nouns and discourse markers are frequently embedded into Megrelian morphosyntactic frames, while borrowed nouns are generally adapted to Megrelian case and plural morphology, indicating that the recipient grammar remains structurally productive. Verbal borrowings reveal stronger Georgian influence, reflecting the morphological complexity of both Kartvelian languages. Younger speakers display more clause-level alternation and more extended Georgian discourse than older speakers.

Contrary to expectations, conversational and narrative texts do not differ substantially in either the frequency or the types of contact-induced phenomena. Instead, the strongest predictors of variation are speaker generation, educational background, and degree of urbanization. Speakers educated primarily through Georgian and those from urban communities exhibit greater Georgian influence than older and rural speakers.

The paper also considers language ideologies within the community. Older speakers primarily express concern over weakening intergenerational transmission, whereas younger speakers increasingly attempt to use "authentic" Megrelian forms, sometimes producing innovative or artificially reconstructed lexical items.

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### **Change, variation and emergent social meaning: Tense marking in Even**

The current paper adds to that body of work arguing that changes in the linguistic systems of speakers of shifting language are systematic and predictable, not chaotic and disorderly, by examining ongoing changes in the verbal system of Even, a northwest Tungusic language spoken in northeastern Russia. Even is currently undergoing rapid language shift, even in Berezovka (Osipov & Khabarovskaya 2025), where some children continue to acquire it. It is being replaced by Russian as the daily language for younger speakers; use of Even is largely restricted to the home. With marked differences in Even dialects, including in tense marking, we focus on only one variety here, Berezovka Even.

Our data show ongoing variation and change in the verbal system of Berezovka Even. There appears to be an ongoing restructuring of the verbal system, with both intra- and inter-speaker variation. Speakers can be divided into three rough categories: traditional speakers, innovative speakers, and shifters. Traditional speakers by and large adhere to the traditional language as described when Berezovka Even was robustly learned and used by all generations (Cincius 1947; Robbek 1989). These speakers show limited variation in the verbal system. Innovative speakers do not adhere to all traditional norms all of the time but show changes in some parts of the linguistic system, at some times. That is, these innovators show considerable intra- and inter-speaker variation. Shifters exhibit limited production in Even and often use verbs in Russian, not Even (1). In contrast, traditional speakers use Russian verbal stems with Even inflectional morphology (2), in the limited cases where they use a Russian word.

Of particular interest are changes in the distinction in tenses in Even. Traditional Berezovka Even makes a distinction between a non-future (or aorist) formed with the morpheme *-ra-* and a past tense formed with the suffix *-ri-*. Telic verbs with this morpheme are generally interpreted as having past tense reference (3a), while atelic verbs have present reference (3b). (See Burykin & Sharina 2021; Malchukov 2023; Pakendorf & Aralova 2020). Telic verbs with *-ra-* are interpreted as having present reference when the imperfective aspect is used (3c). Descriptive and pedagogical resources in Even generally refer to forms such as (3b) as in the present tense. In addition to this semantic complexity, there is morphological complexity, with different conjugational classes for verbal stems ending in vowels, in consonants, and in *-n*. Adding to morphological complexity, N-stems show further variation according to subgroups based on stem type.

We focus on the innovative speakers in contrast to the traditional speakers; the latter group show some limited signs of change and variation in verbs, suggesting early signs of change. The innovators show more widespread change and more widespread variation, at times using traditional forms. This variation is in part suggestive of restructuring in process. There is a strong tendency to use a past in — *ri-* with telic (4a), where traditional speakers use *-ra-* (4b). Some innovative speakers overgeneralize the imperfective + *-ra-* (which surfaces as *-d-da-*) for indicating present tense, and/or overgeneralize *-ra-*, in particular with N-stem verbs (5), producing forms that are rejected by traditional speakers as ill-formed or non-existent, suggesting an ongoing move toward a past-present tense opposition.

Variation in robustly spoken languages is known to be a resource for social meaning and change; sociolinguistic variation and style shifting is documented in endangered languages (Kasstan 2019). We show that the variation across innovative speakers provides a space for emergent social meaning, and a small group of innovators comprise a community of practice (Eckert 2006, 2000), developing innovative forms and spreading them across the group. Emergent sociolinguistic variation is attested in changes to the pronominal system (Grenoble et al.: *forthcoming*).

Data were collected from 37 speakers in 2021 and 2023 using a mixed methods approach of semi-structured sociolinguistic interviews, structured elicitation, and narrative elicitation.

### Data (Russian in boldface)

- (1) Russian verbs, shifting speaker (born 2008)

|            |              |               |                    |            |                |            |              |              |
|------------|--------------|---------------|--------------------|------------|----------------|------------|--------------|--------------|
| <b>Mm,</b> | <b>vrode</b> | <b>most</b>   | <b>razvyazali</b>  | <i>jan</i> | <i>egdžete</i> | <b>i</b>   | <i>nakat</i> | <b>upali</b> |
| <b>mm</b>  | <b>sorta</b> | <b>bridge</b> | <b>they.untied</b> | and        | moose          | <b>and</b> | bear         | <b>fell</b>  |

- (2) Russian verb stem, Even morphology, traditional speaker (born 1973)

|                        |              |                  |                   |
|------------------------|--------------|------------------|-------------------|
| <i>Matematika-β-da</i> | <i>3s3-m</i> | <i>dʒoŋtʃi-r</i> | <i>ɲutʃi-ditʃ</i> |
| math-ACC-PRT           | NEG-1SG      | remember-CVB.NEG | Russian-INST      |

|                                            |                                 |
|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>ob</b> ” <i>jasnja-tʃi-d-tʃa-βu-tan</i> | <i>utalukan-dʒi-d-di-βu-tan</i> |
| <b>explain</b> -DUR-IPFV-PST-POSS-3PL      | explain-DUR-IPFV-PST-POSS-3PL   |

‘[And] math, I don’t remember, that [they] explained, explained it to me.’

- (3) a. *-ra-/-r3-*, telic, bounded

*t3g-r3-β*  
sit.down-AOR-1SG  
‘I sat down’

- b. *-ra-*, atelic, unbounded

*t3g3t-t3-m* be.seated-AOR-1SG  
‘I am seated’

- c. *-ra-/-r3-*, telic, bounded: imperfective aspect

*t3g-d-d3-m*  
sit.down-IPFV-AOR-1SG  
‘I am sitting down’ (examples from Robbek 1989: 69)

- (4) a. *-ra-*, for past reference, telic verbs, used by traditional speakers

|                 |                 |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| <i>Hurken-Ø</i> | <i>tik-re-n</i> |
| boy-NOM         | fall-AOR-3SG    |

‘The boy fell’

- b. *-ri-*, for past reference, telic verbs, frequent across innovative speakers

|                 |                 |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| <i>Hurken-Ø</i> | <i>tik-ri-n</i> |
| boy-NOM         | fall-PST-3SG    |

‘The boy fell’

- (5) overgeneralization of *-ra-*, judged ungrammatical  
*Hurk<sub>3</sub>-r-Ø toll<sub>3</sub> h<sub>3</sub>akita-β \*h<sub>3</sub>βk<sub>3</sub>n-3-d-d<sub>3</sub>-Ø*  
 boy-PL-NOM outside tree-ACC \*plant-IPFV-AOR-3PL  
**expected:**  
*h<sub>3</sub>βk<sub>3</sub>-t/i-d-d<sub>3</sub>-Ø*  
 plant-DUR-IPFV-AOR-3PL  
 ‘The boys are planting a tree outside’

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### **Lexical variation in mixed languages: Doublets as a window into formation processes**

Mixed languages emerge in situations of community bilingualism, combining structural and lexical elements from two identifiable source languages while serving as markers of a new identity (Bakker 1997; Golovko 1994; Meakins 2014). Despite sharing this social function, mixed languages exhibit remarkable structural diversity. This paper investigates whether this diversity is systematically related to the specific patterns of emergence that gave rise to each language, focusing on lexical doublets — synonymous word pairs originating from both lexifier languages, corresponding to a single concept — as a diagnostic feature. Table 1 below provides examples of doublets found in the mixed languages discussed in this study.

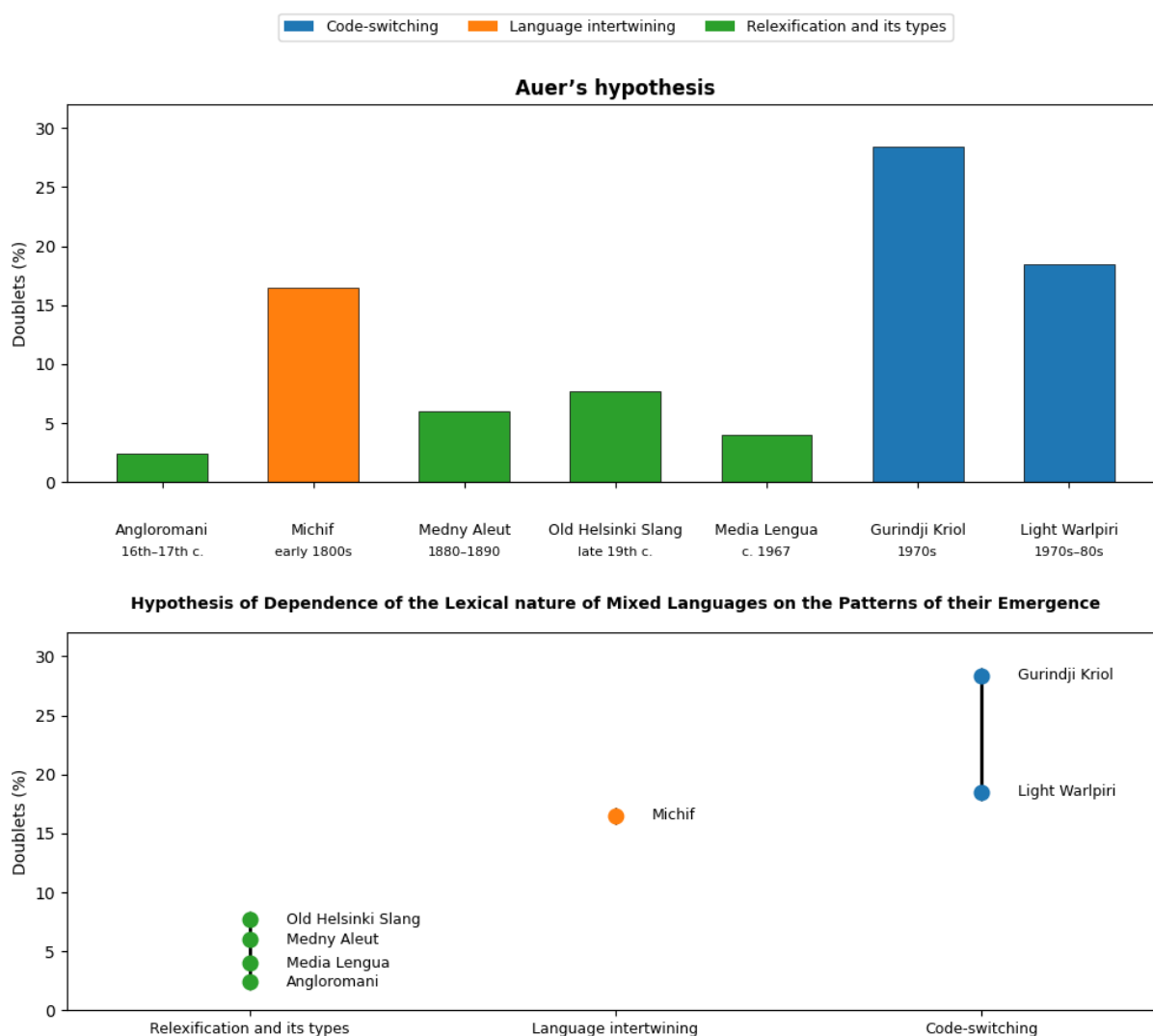
*Table 1. Doublets in Mixed Languages*

| Semantic Field<br>(WOLD) | Meaning | French        | Cree        | Michif                 |
|--------------------------|---------|---------------|-------------|------------------------|
| The body                 | ‘horn’  | corne         | potachikana | pootawchikun / en korn |
| The physical world       | ‘rain’  | pluie         | kimiwan     | kimouwun / la pwee     |
| Semantic Field<br>(WOLD) | Meaning | Kriol         | Gurindji    | Gurindji Kriol         |
| Kinship                  | ‘I’     | ai            | ngayu       | ai / ngayu             |
| Cognition                | ‘what’  | wat           | nyampa      | wat / nyampa           |
| Semantic Field<br>(WOLD) | Meaning | Local Quechua | Spanish     | Media Lengua           |
| Animals                  | ‘dog’   | ashku         | perro       | ashku / pirru          |
| Semantic Field<br>(WOLD) | Meaning | Russian       | Aleut       | Medny Aleut            |
| Quantity                 | ‘one’   | один          | атаҕан      | odin / ataҕan          |

Previous research (Gridneva 2022) established that the etymological composition of core vocabulary (Swadesh lists) reflects that of the overall lexicon in mixed languages, and identified a correlation between the number of doublets and the degree of lexical "mixedness": the more evenly vocabulary is distributed between lexifiers, the greater the number of doublets. A subsequent study (Gridneva, forthcoming) expanded the language sample and proposed a hypothesis linking doublet frequency to patterns of emergence, challenging Auer's (1999) diachronic model which posits that variation decreases over time as mixed languages stabilise.

Figure 2 compares how the expectations based on each of these hypotheses are fulfilled. The upper panel tests Auer's hypothesis: languages are arranged from bottom to top in order of increasing estimated age. The lower panel tests my hypothesis: the same languages are grouped according to their emergence patterns, with the order within each group carrying no significance.

Figure 2



Languages emerging from code-switching, such as Gurindji Kriol and Light Warlpiri, conventionalised a mode of discourse where lexical alternatives from both source languages were routinely available, which is reflected in the substantial presence of synonymous doublets. Michif, by contrast, arose through language intertwining, a process whereby the nominal and verbal systems of two distinct languages are combined into a single organic whole without either component being simply replaced by the other, resulting in an intermediate level of lexical mixture. The relexification type, encompassing both its classical and mirror-opposite variants, presents a fundamentally different outcome, as it entails the systematic replacement of lexical stems or the preservation of ancestral vocabulary against a backdrop of imported grammatical structure. Mirror-opposite relexification, as attested in Angloromani and Medny Aleut, preserves the lexicon of the ancestral language — Romani and Aleut respectively — while absorbing the grammatical structure of a socially dominant language, a pattern that Croft characterises as the inverse of Media Lengua and Chlenov similarly describes for Medny Aleut as a reverse mirror-image. Paralexification, exemplified by Old Helsinki Slang, represents a less determinate subtype wherein Finnish grammar combines with a substantial Swedish-derived lexicon, yet Swedish and Finnish forms coexist as optional equivalents for numerous core concepts, reflecting sustained variability rather than complete replacement. In such cases, the lexicon is overwhelmingly dominated by a single source, leaving minimal room for

variation and thus yielding the lowest incidence of doublets. The formative mechanism, therefore, rather than the mere passage of time, determines the degree of lexical optionality that a mixed language ultimately displays.

The present study tests these competing hypotheses on a sample of seven mixed varieties: Angloromani, Media Lengua, Medny Aleut, Old Helsinki Slang, Michif, Light Warlpiri, and Gurindji Kriol. Using the Swadesh 100 list as a standardised sampling tool, I analyse: (i) quantitative distribution of doublets across languages, (ii) their semantic fields (examined through World Loanword Database borrowed scores), (iii) correlation with degree of grammatical mixing, and (iv) their social functions as documented in descriptive sources.

(i) Results reveal that doublet frequency patterns are consistent with emergence type rather than language age. Code-switching-derived languages show the highest doublet rates; language intertwining occupies an intermediate position; while relexification and its variants yield the lowest rates. (ii) Semantic analysis shows doublets concentrate in concepts with lower borrowed scores cross-linguistically (body parts, kin terms, basic actions), suggesting they represent stable, conventionalised variation rather than transient instability. (iii) Furthermore, doublet frequency correlates positively with degree of grammatical mixing across both nominal and verbal domains, indicating that formative processes shape lexical and structural outcomes coherently. (iv) The social functions of doublets further corroborate this typology. In code-switching-derived languages like Gurindji Kriol, doublets serve as active sociolinguistic resources for addressee accommodation and identity marking (Meakins & O'Shannessy 2005), whereas in relexification types they are largely marginal. This functional asymmetry confirms that the formative process determines not only the quantity of lexical variation but also its pragmatic status.

These findings have implications for understanding mixed language genesis and for the applicability of diachronic models to contact languages. They demonstrate that mixed languages resist conventional historical-comparative frameworks (cf. Bakker 2000 on glottochronology) and that variation in such languages need not decrease over time.

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## **Structural Vulnerability and Dynamics of Language Obsolescence (Plenary talk)**

Language obsolescence is often described in terms of loss, simplification, and reduction, yet the structural mechanisms underlying these processes are rarely treated as systematic or theoretically constrained. This paper argues that attritional processes in endangered languages are not random but follow recurrent patterns of structural vulnerability across different components of the linguistic system.

The analysis considers multiple domains cross-linguistically, including (morpho)phonology, morphosyntax, and lexical systems. Although these areas involve distinct types of linguistic complexity, they exhibit parallel developments under conditions of language shift. Across domains, speakers show increasing variation, the emergence of optionality, and the extension of unmarked or default forms, leading to the reduction of more fine-grained distinctions.

Attrition tends to target features that are: (i) structurally complex, (ii) low in transparency, (iii) weakly supported by frequency, and (iv) not reinforced by the dominant contact language. In morphosyntax, this is reflected in the weakening of polysynthetic structures and a shift toward more analytic patterns. In lexical domains, particularly in culturally embedded systems, reduction is closely linked to changes in social practices and to the influence of dominant-language models.

These observations suggest that language obsolescence can be understood as a process of systematic restructuring, in which the most complex and least supported components of the linguistic system are progressively reorganized. At the same time, such restructuring does not necessarily entail the disappearance of the language but may contribute to its continued use in a modified form.

Kerry Hull (Brigham Young University)

## **Enregistering Authority under Language Shift: Ritual Language Change in Endangered Ch'orti' Maya**

This paper examines how language endangerment and ongoing language shift shape patterns of variation and change across speech genres in the endangered language Ch'orti' Maya spoken in eastern Guatemala. Rather than treating Spanish influence as diffuse borrowing or generalized attrition, I argue that contact and ritual decline have contributed to the enregisterment of a tightly constrained juridical–cosmological register used in curing discourse (Agha 2003; Agha 2005). In this sense, juridical speech functions as a socially recognized and typified way of speaking associated with authority, legitimacy, and enforceable action.

Drawing on documented curing prayers, diagnostic exchanges, and metapragmatic commentary gleaned from more than three years of fieldwork among the Ch'orti', I show that Spanish juridical lexemes (e.g. *justicia*, *sentencia*, *licencia*, *defensa*, *pago*) undergo systematic semantic specialization in ritual contexts, consistent with register-based meaning formation (Agha 2007). These forms occur within a highly patterned procedural sequence—authorization, investigation, innocence claims, representation or advocacy, payment, and enforcement—through which illness is framed as accountable action rather than accident. Under conditions of language endangerment, this organization becomes particularly clear as ritual contexts rely more consistently on Spanish when questions of authority, judgment, or responsibility are at stake. Rather than producing loose or variable mixing, this distribution reflects a stable division of labor between the two languages, shaped by contact dynamics and genre restriction (Matras & Sakel 2007; Hildebrandt et al. 2017).

This previously unexamined dimension of Ch'orti' informs current debates on variation versus change in language shift settings by showing that endangerment does not necessarily entail simplification or structural erosion, as often assumed in classic models of language obsolescence (Dorian 1981). Instead, it can yield domain-specific stabilization and even complexification, as particular contact forms become constrained, specialized, relexicalized, and socially recognized as the appropriate medium for certain kinds of action (Kantarovich et al. 2021). More broadly, the paper highlights how indexical value and social meaning shape which contact resources become routinized as “the right way to speak” in endangered-language contexts (Silverstein 2003), and how variation across genres may crystallize into durable patterns of linguistic organization over time (Eckert 2018).

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## Variation in the use of numerals in Erzya–Russian bilingual discourse

In this presentation, I examine variation in numeral phrases in spoken Erzya–Russian bilingual discourse. The language use of Erzya speakers is characterized by varying degrees of code-switching into Russian, as all the speakers of this endangered language are bilinguals. The analysis is based on interviews broadcast throughout the year 2025 on Radio Vaygel, which primarily serves Erzya- and Moksha-speaking audiences. The material reflects the diverse language use of Erzya speakers, as the interviewees come from a wide range of backgrounds. For the analysis, I use the Matrix-Language Frame Model (Myers-Scotton 1993, 2002).

Numeral phrases are particularly frequent in life-history interviews and display variation between Erzya, Russian, and mixed constructions. Russian phrases are typically used to express dates and ages, and they are inserted into Erzya discourse as chunks, which are “multimorphemic elements of a language that are accessed as unanalyzed (i.e.: lexical) units in speech” (Backus 1999: 93). (Russian phrases are marked with bold face in the examples.)

- (1) *Vojnaś koda ušodovś? V sorok tret'em godu topod's šemnadsat' l'et miñeñek.*  
 vojna-ś koda ušodov-ś v sorok tret'em godu  
 war-DEF.SG how start-PST.3SG in forty three.PREP year.PREP  
 topod'-ś šemnadsat' l'et miñeñek  
 fill-PST.3SG seventeen year.PL.GEN 1PL.DAT  
 ‘How the war started? In 1943, we turned 17.’

Erzya constructions typically occur in the language use of speakers who generally avoid code-switching. Even in these cases, Russian forms may appear alongside Erzya ones; however, the Erzya version is usually added after the Russian one as a form of self-repair.

- (2) *Ėese ėeatraš ul'ñeś panžoź, koñov langs ul'ñeś panžoź v vošemd'eśat d'evjatom godu, kavksoñgemeñ vejksece ijeste.*  
 ėese ėeatraš ul'ñ-eś panžo-ź koñov langs  
 here theater-DEF.SG be-PST.3SG open-CVB paper on  
 ul'ñ-eś panž-oź v vošemd'eśat d'evjatom godu  
 be-PST.3SG open-CVB in eighteen nine.PREP year.PREP  
 kavksoñgemeñ vejksece ije-ste  
 eighty nineth year-ELA  
 ‘Here, the theater was opened, on paper, it was opened ’89, in the year ’89.’

On the other hand, numeral phrases involving numerals below ten, tend to be expressed by these speakers only in Erzya, even when referring to contexts in which Russian language dominates (school, administration, work).

- (3) *Kavkso klasst mon pradiñ Šejn-Majdanskoy internatso.*  
 kavkso klass-t mon pradi-ñ  
 eight class-PL 1SG finish-PST.1SG  
 šejn-majdanskoy internat-so  
 Shein-Majdan.ADJ boarding.school-INE  
 ‘I finished eight classes at the Shein-Majdan boarding school.’

In my presentation, I am going to explore possible factors behind this variation, taking into account the results published by Khomchenkova-Pleshak (2021) studying Moksha–Russian and Hill Mari–Russian code-switching (they list as the main factors “the numerical

value, the type of the context, and the syntactic type of the numeral” Khomchenkova-Pleshak (2021: 277)).

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## **An endangered dialect at the crossroads of language interaction: the case of Tatyshly Udmurt**

The study focuses on Tatyshly Udmurt, an Udmurt (< Permic < Finno-Ugric) variety spoken in Bashkortostan (Russia) which differs greatly from the literary standard and is influenced by heterogenous situations of language contact. Firstly, it has been in a long-standing contact with local Turkic varieties (intermediate between Tatar and Bashkir). Secondly, it has been influenced by Russian, the official state language of Russia. Thirdly, speakers of Tatyshly Udmurt are familiar with Standard Udmurt, which sometimes causes interference. Example (1) combines a Russian borrowing *komnata* ‘room’, Turkic borrowings *s'es'ka* ‘flower’ and *č'eber* ‘beautiful’ which have also been adopted by Standard Udmurt (3017 and 8333 occurrences in MUC respectively), a Turkic borrowing *gul* ‘flower’ remaining outside the standard language (with only 7 occurrences in MUC), and the accusative plural affix *-tâ* following the literary standard (its local variant would be *-âz*, see Kelmakov (1998: 119)).

In the talk, we will outline the directions of influence on Tatyshly Udmurt and discuss what structural levels they belong to and how systematic they are. The data come from team fieldwork conducted in several villages of the Tatyshly district (Republic of Bashkortostan, Russia) in 2019–2025. Elicitation was carried out for various phonetic, grammatical and lexical phenomena. We also used the corpus of oral texts (CTU) — ca. 75.6 thousand tokens so far.

The Russian influence on Tatyshly Udmurt encompasses a wide range of phenomena, including not only lexical borrowing within open classes, but also borrowing from closed classes (which sometimes involve the whole construction). Examples include conjunctions, e.g. *il'i* (< Rus. *ili*) (2), some indefinite pronouns (e.g. *kot'-ku* [although-when] ‘always’ < Rus. *xot'*), and a superlative (*samoj kez'ât* [most cold] ‘the coldest’ < Rus. *samyj*). See Kaysina (2015) on a similar picture for Russian influence on Standard Udmurt.

Contact between Tatyshly Udmurt and the Turkic varieties (see Tarakanov (1993, 2012) for an overview of the Udmurt-Turkic contact) resulted in lexical borrowings, including domains such as kinship terms considered typologically rare instances of borrowing (Tadmor 2009: 64), and in structural influence at various levels, cf. presumably borrowed phonemes *ä* and *ë* with elements of vowel harmony (Kelmakov 1998: 58–59, 73), complex predicates with subtle semantic restrictions (cf. (3a) from Tatyshly Udmurt and (3b) from the local Turkic variety), or some constructions of subordination.

The influence of Standard Udmurt concerns individual items in phonetics, morphology, and lexicon, albeit in an unsystematic manner. It should also be noted that, in terms of Thomason (2014), Standard Udmurt is much more congruent with Tatyshly Udmurt than Russian or the Turkic varieties. Therefore, its influence concerns specific items rather than the architecture of language structures. For instance, the phoneme *â* regularly corresponds to the Standard Udmurt *j*. However, there are numerous exceptions in the CTU corpus: 577 tokens include the phoneme *j* (the dialectal variant *â* occurs in 14216 tokens). Interestingly, another phonetic correspondence — replacing standard hard affricates *č* and *ž* with *č'š* and *ž'ž'* — is consistent, with *č* and *ž* being totally atypical of Tatyshly Udmurt. This may lead to the emergence of “mixed” forms such as *pišatini* ‘transmit’ (standard: *pičatini*), *kjše* ‘how’ (standard: *kjče*), in which the standard vowel *j* co-occurs with the dialectal affricate substitute *š*. An asymmetry in the frequency of standard forms is observed for converbs. The dialectal variant

*-kâ* encoding a simultaneous action is attested 117 times in CTU, while its standard counterpart *-ku* (see e.g. Perevoschikov (1959: 56–58)) is also attested in the corpus (20 tokens). However, for the limitative converb, only the dialectal variant *-č'č'ož* is used (19 tokens in CTU), not the standard variant *-tož*.

The talk will evaluate the data presented in the abstract alongside some additional examples against a broader backdrop of the extent to which standard languages influence the structural levels of dialects compared to the impact of contact between diverse languages; see e.g. Hudson (1996: 43–45, 169–175), Kuznetsova (2002) and Doreleijers et al. (2022).

### Examples

- (1) *ta komnata-is' a'ž'-is'ko-Ø mon s'es'ka-jos-tâ,*  
 this room-EL see-PRS-1SG I flower-PL-ACC  
*č'eber-es' gûl-jos-tâ.*  
 beautiful-PL.ADJ flower-PL-ACC  
 'In this room I see flowers, beautiful flowers'. (CTU)
- (2) *il'i kin ke les't-em=a so-lâ, il'i mar=a.*  
 or who INDEF make-PST2=Q that-DAT or what=Q  
 'Either someone did something to him or something else happened'.
- (3) a. *mon van' kanfet-jos-âz / \*odig kanfet s'iâ-sa pot-i-Ø.*  
 I all candy-PL-ACC one candy eat-CVB go\_out-PST-1SG  
 b. *min büten kânfet-ne / \*ber kânfet-ne*  
 I all candy-ACC one candy-ACC  
*aša-p s'rk-tr-m.*  
 eat-CVB go\_out-PST-1SG  
 'I ate all candies of different kinds / \*a candy'.

### Glosses

1 — 1<sup>st</sup> person; ACC — accusative; CVB — converb; DAT — dative; EL — elative; INDEF — indefinite; PL — plural; PL.ADJ — plural affix of adjectives; PRS — present tense; PST — past tense; PST2 — second past tense; SG — singular; Q — question particle.

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### **Some outcomes of Itelmen—Russian contacts in the Northern Itelmen dialect**

Quite recently Itelmen was spoken in the South-West of Kamchatka. Some researchers regard it as a part of the Chukot-Kamchatka language family. It was represented by two dialects — Northern and Southern. In the 2010s there were several competent speakers of both dialects, but during the COVID epidemic and right after it most of them left this world. Today there remains only one competent speaker of the Northern dialect. As for the Southern dialect, it is now represented by several “new speakers” who acquired the language as the second language being grown-ups.

Actually, Itelmen might be called properly documented, but it concerns only its Southern dialect (eg. Krasheninnikov 1775; Stebnitskiy 1934; Worth (ed.) 1961; Volodin 1976; Georg, Volodin 1999; Bobalik 1996, etc.). As for the Northern dialect, there exist only a brief grammar sketch of Tatiana Moll (1960) and two publications by Chikako Ono (2003; 2020). So, it is a sort of a sign from the sky that we are given an opportunity to fill gaps in our documentation of this dialect.

Proper documentation of Itelmen including text recording started at the very beginning of the XXth century and is connected with the names of W. Bogoras and W. Johelson. They both mention signs of language attrition in Itelmen as a result of contacts with Russian; e.g. W. Bogoras wrote: “The Kamchadal (= Itelmen) language has lost many of its numerals, some pronouns, and a significant number of nouns and adjectives, replacing them all with Russian terms. The latter have not been adapted to Kamchadal morphology but remain unchanged. Russification is also observed in the grammatical structure” (Bogoras 1922, 641, cited in Volodin 1994, 325).

Since then, the influence of Russian on the Itelmen language (mainly on its Southern dialect) has been examined in at least three publications: (Volodin 1994; Comrie 1999; Shafer et al. 2021).

Volodin compares the Johelson texts (ab. 30000 tokens) with his own material recorded in the 1960s-1970s (ab. 25000 tokens) and finds out that though much more Russian lexical borrowings or code-switching cases appear in the texts, no great structural changes had happened in Itelmen during the first half of the XXth century, but for the word order. The key feature of the Itelmen grammar — its verb — remains untouched. Comrie agrees that there are no significant traces of language attrition in Itelmen. In (Shafer et al.) the Johelson’s and Volodin’s data are compared once again.

In the paper I am going to present an overview of the outcomes of the Itelmen contact with Russian in the Northern Itelmen dialect using my text data (ab. 25000 tokens) recorded from the last speaker of the dialect in 2022–2025. The texts contain no more Russian insertions than those from Volodin’s texts from the 1960s-1970s. The only difference is that in addition to older borrowings and intra-phrase switches, inter-phrase code switches appear. Perhaps these were originally present in Volodin’s texts, but were removed during their editing for publication.

Then I’ll analyze the strategies of Russian verbs /verbal stems insertion in the Itelmen texts using the analysis framework suggested in (Wohlgemuth 2009) and applied to Russian as a donor language in (Forker 2021). In the morden Itelmen texts of the last Northern dialect speaker the following strategies are used:

1) Quite often Russian verbs are included in an Itelmen text as islets (after Myers-Scotton 1993) whereby Russian grammar markers are preserved (1), (2).

2) The use of Itelmen verb markers with Russian verb stems (present /imperative) or just Russian infinitive form are also not rare. Both direct (3) and indirect (4), (5) insertion strategies are possible. In the latter case the suffix — *ʔ* is used, a verbalizer deriving verbs from Itelmen nouns.

3) Finally, a Russian verb in the Russian infinitive form can be inserted into an Itelmen phrase with the help of an auxiliary (light) verb *il-kas* ‘go’ (the verb is now used in this meaning only in the Southern dialect), which can be also used to produce verbs from Itelmen nouns (6). Necessary Itelmen grammar markers are joined to this light verb.

All these strategies are also found in the Volodin’s texts and some in the Johelson’s texts as well.

The fact is that though today the Itelmen language has approached the brim of extinction, its last speaker is keeping it structurally and lexically quite safe, without deep scars of attrition.

### Examples

- (1) *vot*                      *ənu*    *pensija-ʃχ*    *anank*                      *bereg-l-a*  
       *so*                        *this*        *rent-DIM*        *3SG.DAT*                *preserve-PST-F.SG[R]*  
       ‘So she kept this *pension* for her’ (FM)

- (2) *nado=ʒə*            *ʔi:*        *qəʃi-k* *nin*        *ənu*  
       *oh.dear*            *very*    *well*    *FOC*    *this*  
       *itənmən*        *jazik*                      *viuʃi-l-a*  
       *Itelmen*        *language*        *learn-PST-F.SG[R]*  
       *kʼ-anʃilʼ-kninnin*  
       *CVB.NARR-learn-CVB.NARR*  
       ‘Oh dear, you learnt the Itelmen *language* very well, you learnt!’ (FM)

- (3) *stoʔko*                *ø-terpet-nin*  
       *so.much*            *SBJ.3SG-endure-SBJ.3SG*  
       ‘(He) endured so much, <...>’ (FM)

- (4) *miʔ*        *do=ʃista*        *kʼ-otkaza-ʔ-knin*  
       *all*        *absolutely*        *CVB.NARR-refuse-VBLZ-CVB.NARR*  
       ‘Absolutely all (of them) refused’ (FM)

- (5) *kʼe-ta*                *ø-stuka-ʔ(ʔ)-s-in*  
       *some-body*        *SBJ.3SG-knock-VBLZ-PRS-SBJ.3SG*  
       ‘Somebody is knocking’ (FM)

- (6) *vot*        *poslʼednoj*        *pensija*                *polucit*                *ø-il-nən*  
       *so*        *last*                *pension*                *receive*                *SBJ.3SG-LV- SBJ.3SG*  
       *qata*                *qam*        *ʔali-k-aq*                *ʔ-k-uin*  
       *already*            *NEG*    *walk-CCM-NEG*        *be-CCM-3SG*  
       ‘So she already did not walk to receive the *last pension*’ (FM)

## Abbreviations

ADJ adjectivizer, CCM conjugation class marker, CVB.NARR narrative converb (infinitive III), DAT dative, DIM diminutive, FM field data, FOC focal particle, FUT future, INF infinitive, LOC locative, NEG negation, OBJ object, PL plural, PRS presence, SBJ subject, SG singular, VBLZ verbalizer

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### Dialectal diversity through structural variation in Khwarshi

Khwarshi and its dialects demonstrate interesting cases of structural variation and change depending on various extralinguistic factors. Khwarshi, one of the five Tsezic languages of the Nakh-Daghestanian family, is spoken in the Republic of Daghestan, Russia. Khwarshi has two dialect clusters: the Inkhokwari cluster, which includes Inkhokwari, Kwantlada, Santlada, and Khwayni dialects, and the Khwarshi cluster, consisting of Khwarshi Proper and Khonokh dialects. Inkhokwari and Khwarshi dialects have been in immediate contact with three languages: Avar, several Andic languages and Russian. Because of their geographical location, these dialects exhibit varying degrees of linguistic contact and consequently display diverse structural changes in grammar under the influence of neighboring languages: the Khwarshi dialect cluster is geographically more distant from the Avar and Andic languages, Inkhokwari, on the other hand, is closer to these language communities, especially speakers of Tindi (an Andic language). As a result, Inkhokwari exhibits a more distinct linguistic influence, while Khwarshi demonstrates a lesser degree of structural alteration. These structural changes are mainly reflected in phonology and morphology.

The most noticeable distinction is in the vocabulary. Inkhokwari incorporates more Avar loanwords than Khwarshi. For instance, Inkhokwari has adopted the Avar adjective *qubar* ‘dirty’, while Khwarshi has retained its native adjective *kohu* with the same meaning.

The effects of intense contact with Andic languages are clearly identifiable in the grammatical structure of Inkhokwari. For example, the Inkhokwari dialect, located close to a population speaking Tindi, has adopted the Andic forms of the numerals from 50 to 90; in contrast, the Khwarshi Proper dialect, which is geographically distant from the Tindi-speaking area, has retained its original numeral system. In Inkhokwari, cardinal numerals from 20 to 40, which are inherent numerals, are based on the vigesimal system.

|    | Numeral                 | Structure |
|----|-------------------------|-----------|
| 20 | quno                    | 20        |
| 30 | quno o <sup>n</sup> c’o | 20 + 10   |
| 40 | q’ <sup>w</sup> enequ   | 2×20      |

Inkhokwari numerals from 50 to 90, loans from Andic languages, are based on the decimal system.

|    |                      |        |
|----|----------------------|--------|
| 50 | išt’ac’a / išt’wac’a | 5 + 10 |
| 60 | inłac’a              | 6 + 10 |
| 70 | hał’ac’a / hał’wac’a | 7 + 10 |

In contrast, in Khwarshi Proper, cardinal numerals above 20 display the vigesimal system:

|    |                |           |
|----|----------------|-----------|
| 20 | qun            | 20        |
| 30 | q-ũc’an        | 20 + 10   |
| 40 | q’uni-qu       | 2×20      |
| 50 | q’uni-qu ũc’an | 2×20 + 10 |
| 60 | łona-qu        | 3×20      |
| 70 | łona-qu ũc’an  | 3×20 + 10 |

The comparison between Inkhokwari and Khwarshi exemplifies a classic case of how geographical proximity influences language contact and change. Proximity enhances extensive borrowing and structural transformations, while greater distance tends to preserve original linguistic characteristics. Inkhokwari demonstrates substantial influence from neighboring languages, whereas Khwarshi retains a more traditional vocabulary and grammatical structure. The paper will demonstrate other cases of structural influence, e.g. adaptation of borrowed verbs.

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## **Intergenerational language change and fluency: An apparent-time corpus study of morphological innovation in Dëne Sųłiné**

In this talk, we describe language variation and ongoing language change in a naturalistic corpus of Dëne Sųłiné (DS), a Northern Dene language spoken in Saskatchewan, Canada. Of the 3,300 speakers in the community, most are bilingual in DS and English, with the majority of the residents dominant in DS, and DS being the daily language of communication in most settings (Jung et al. 2018). The corpus comprises 70+ hours by more than 105 speakers born between 1934 and 2009. Speakers are grouped by age category (Elder, middle-aged, young speaker). Community discourses often disparage the language of young speakers as less fluent.

We look at four different types of morphological innovations in the corpus: verb length (in syllables), morpheme order, detransitivizing morphology with the impersonal subject prefix and analogical change in detransitivizing morphology more broadly. What emerges is a complex picture of a language contact situation involving both **simplification** of individual structures by individual speakers and **complexification** of the language system as a whole (pace Cook 1989).

DS verbs may contain a multitude of lexical, derivational, and inflectional prefixes; the stem usually is in word-final position. They are usually classified as exhibiting a fixed order with little flexibility (Rice 2000). One complex example examined here is the verb ‘to teach’ with several lexicalized prefixes in various positions (1). Older speakers use a canonical morpheme order (1a) while many speakers born between 1980 and 1995 switch the relative order of the lexical *ně-* prefix and the object marker (1b). Speakers born after 1995 often move the direct object prefix to the left edge of the word—the oblique object position (1c). (1a) and (1c) also demonstrate that many younger speakers shorten verbs (Lovick et al. 2024): the form in (1a) has seven syllables, the ones in (1b-1c) only six.

Further changes discussed here involve detransitivizing morphology. Several constructions including the passive, reflexive and reciprocal object, and the first person duoplural subject require a detransitivizing voice/valence marker in the position before the stem (Kibrik 1996). In conservative speech, the verb class determines whether detransitivization is marked by *l-* or *d-* in the position before the verb stem. (2) demonstrates analogical expansion of detransitivizing *D-* to cover more/all verb classes. (3) demonstrates that innovative speakers expand the detransitivizing pattern to include the impersonal subject construction, which historically does not trigger this change (Willems & Lovick to appear). Those innovative speakers demonstrate sensitivity to the transitivity-decreasing semantics of the impersonal subject prefix.

The emerging picture of variation and change is multi-faceted and complex. We certainly observe that the younger the speaker, the more innovative their speech. This includes the correlation of younger age with shorter verb forms. Yet we also note that many highly innovative speakers indicate a preference for DS over English, leading us to reject a view of these innovations as a sign of lack of DS fluency. The instances of analogical change and pattern expansion suggest instead that many young speakers have considerable morphological awareness, even when their use of the system differs from that of more conservative speakers.

## Examples

- (1a) *há-dá-noh-u-ně-l-tën* ‘they teach us/you PL’ (EZA, 1-Elder)  
LEX-DIST-1/2DPL.O-LEX-LEX-VV-teach:IPFV conservative form
- (1b) *há-dá-ně-noh-ě-l-tën* ‘they teach us/you PL’ (OTR, 2-Middle)  
LEX-DIST-LEX-1/2DPL.O-IPFV-VV-teach:IPFV fronting of lexical *ně-*
- (1c) *no-há-dó-ně-tën* ‘they taught us/you PL’ (UTL, 3-Young)  
1/2DPL.O-LEX-DIST.LEX-LEX-teach:IPFV fronting of obj. *noh-*
- (2a) *ná-ts’ë-0-dhër* ‘one stays (at a place)’ (EZA, 1-Elder)  
CONT-IMPSL.S-VV-SG.stay:IPFV no detransitivization
- (2b) *ná-ts’ë-d-dhër* ‘one stays (at a place)’ (NOD, 3-Young)  
CONT-IMPSL.S-VV-SG.stay:IPFV detransitivization w/ D
- (3a) O *ná-ě-l-ní* ‘O is bought’ (AMS, 1-Elder)  
O LEX-LEX-VV-buy:IPFV detransitivization w/ L
- (3b) O *ná-h-dí* ‘O is bought’ (ALN, 2-Middle)  
O LEX-LEX-VV.buy:IPFV detransitivization w/ D

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## **Verbale vs. nominale Morphologie im Sprachkontakt: Das Fallbeispiel des modernen Älvdalischen**

Älvdalisch ist eine skandinavische Mikrosprache mit etwa 2000–2500 Sprecherinnen und Sprechern (Nyström C Sapir 2018), die in Älvdalen (Mittelschweden) nahe der norwegischen Grenze gesprochen wird. Sie unterscheidet sich in ihrer Grammatik sowohl von den skandinavischen Standardsprachen als auch von den benachbarten Nicht-Standardvarietäten derart, dass eine Verständigung zwischen anderen skandinavischen Varietäten und dem Älvdalischen nicht möglich ist (Ringmar 2005). Die Unterschiede sind u.a. auf Archaismen des (traditionellen) Älvdalischen zurückzuführen. Beispiele für Archaismen sind in der Phonologie der Erhalt von Nasalvokalen, in der Morphosyntax ein weitgehender Erhalt des Kasusystems und ein Drei-Genus-System beim Substantiv sowie die Person-Numerus-Flexion beim Verb (Åkerberg 2012). Das traditionelle Älvdalische entspricht damit dem Typus kleiner, isolierter, komplexer Sprachen in Sprachgemeinschaften mit engen sozialen Netzwerken (vgl. z.B. Baechler C Seiler 2016, Trudgill 2011: 101). Im 20. Jh. — besonders ab der Zeit nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg — wurde Älvdalisch in vielen Familien nicht mehr an die Kinder weitergegeben, da die Eltern Bildungsdefizite durch mangelnde Schwedischkenntnisse befürchteten (Garbacz 2010: 31–33). Erst ab den 1980er-Jahren und verstärkt seit der Jahrtausendwende entstanden Initiativen, die sich für eine Revitalisierung der Sprache u.a. durch Förderprogramme im Vorschul- und Schulalter einsetzen, vgl. Melerska (2011) und Garbacz (2024). Für die Generation der unter 15-Jährigen ermittelte eine Umfrage 2018 einen Spracherhalt von etwas weniger als einem Drittel (Tegnér 2018); der Rest spricht v.a. einen standardnahen Regiolekt des Schwedischen, den auch alle Älvdalischsprachigen häufig oder sogar mehrheitlich sprechen.

2018 und 2019 haben wir etwa 15 Stunden spontansprachlicher Daten von Gewährspersonen dreier Generationen (10 Personen der Jahrgänge 1930–1950; 16 Personen: 1950–1990; 10 Personen: 1991–2010) erhoben. Die Daten zeigen einen Erhalt morphosyntaktischer Kategorien beim Verb mit nur geringfügigen Abweichungen zwischen den Generationen, aber starke Vereinfachungen im Kategoriengefüge der Nomina. Das Kasusystem ist schon bei der älteren Generation sehr variativ und nähert sich bei manchen dem deflektierten Zustand des Standardschwedischen an. Bei den jüngsten Gewährspersonen ist nicht nur das Kasusystem weitgehend abgebaut, sondern auch die Markierung der Definitheitskategorie instabil. Durch den Verlust der Nasalvokale werden bestimmte und unbestimmte Formen (z.B. *kulla* ‘Mädchen’ vs. *kullq* ‘das Mädchen’, *flugo* ‘Fliege’ vs. *flugq* ‘die Fliege’, *rakka* ‘Hunde’ vs. *rakkq* ‘die Hunde’) synkretisch. Auch die Definitheitsopposition, die durch den Kontrast *-er* und *-är* markiert wird (z.B. *ukser* ‘Ochsen’ vs. *uksär* ‘die Ochsen’), ist ausgeebnet (Autor/-in 1 C Autor/-in 2), obschon bei den betonten *e*-Lauten keine Zusammenfälle bekannt sind. Angesichts des hohen Grammatikalisierungsgrades der Definitheitskategorie in den germanischen Sprachen ist diese Entwicklung bemerkenswert.

In unserem Vortrag fokussieren wir auf das verbale und nominale System der jüngsten Gewährspersonen und diskutieren die typologische Auffälligkeit ihres morphosyntaktischen Inventars. Dabei soll auf die Frage eingegangen werden, ob das moderne Älvdalische der jüngsten Generation am besten als Herkunftssprache mit deutlichen Anzeichen von *language attrition* einzustufen ist oder ob die beobachtbaren Vereinfachungen mit Blick auf andere (nord-)germanische Varietäten nicht auch andere Interpretationen zulassen und es sich bei den Entwicklungen daher womöglich um ‘normalen’ Sprachwandel handelt.

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## Contact-induced or Internally Driven? Phonetic Variation in Bildts

Bildts (West Germanic, Indo-European) is spoken by approximately 10,000 people in the region of het Bildt in Friesland, the Netherlands. It occupies a unique position at the intersection of Dutch and West Frisian (van Sluis et al., 2016), reflecting a long-standing multilingual contact setting. Yet, Bildts phonetic variation and the extent to which contact with Dutch and Frisian shapes it remain largely undescribed. This study examines vocalic and consonantal variation in Bildts based on a reading task performed by seven speakers in March 2025. Our work shows influence from both contact languages, alongside ongoing inter- and intraspeaker variation associated with this contact.

Vocalic alternations are attested across lexical items and on the broader phonological level. Across individual items, contact influence is reflected in the numeral *fyf*, which varies between [fif] and [faɪf] (cf. Dutch *vijf*), and in word-final *-y*, normatively [i] (e.g. *gerazy* [gə'ra:zi]) but occasionally surfacing as [jə], aligning with Frisian pronunciation (cf. [ga'ra:zjə]). More broadly, several words with diphthongal nuclei show alternation between diphthongal and monophthongal realizations (e.g. *niet* [nit] ~ [niət], *floed* [flut] ~ [fluət]), possibly reflecting a broader tendency toward monophthongization under Dutch influence.

Beyond item-specific vocalic alternations, a systematic pattern emerges in the realization of the diphthong /ɛɪ/: normatively [ɛɪ̯] (Buwalda et al., 2013), it is frequently realized as [aɪ̯]/[æɪ̯]. Acoustic measurements of the diphthong onset ( $N = 301$  tokens, 7 speakers) confirm the robustness of this shift: mean formant values (females: F1 = 808 Hz, F2 = 1804 Hz; males: F1 = 633 Hz, F2 = 1522 Hz) are closer to Standard Dutch /a/ than /ɛ/ (Adank et al., 2004) in F1–F2 space. This pattern is consistent across six of seven speakers and not restricted to particular words, suggesting an ongoing sound change rather than lexicalized variation. Notably, the source of this shift is not easily attributable to contact: both Dutch and Frisian normatively realize the corresponding diphthong as [ɛɪ̯], which makes neither language an obvious model for the change. The conditioning of this shift, whether phonological, social, or both, remains to be established.

Consonantal variation likewise reflects influence from both contact languages. Several processes align with Frisian: the word-final cluster /nd/ may surface as [nt] (e.g. *lând* [lant]), a normative Bildts form, or as [n], paralleling Frisian *lân* [lɔ:n]; voicing alternations (e.g. *bezite* [be'zitə] ~ [be'sitə]) also resemble Frisian consonantal patterns. Dutch influence is evident in the variable realization of /g/ in geographical compounds (e.g. *Mariëngaard*, *Wijngaarden*), where speakers alternate between a stop [g], a norm form, and a fricative [ɣ], suggesting accommodation to Dutch place-name pronunciation norms. Additional processes include intervocalic d-lenition (e.g. *eerder* [ɪədər] ~ [ɪðdər]) and variable realization of word-final *-en*, surfacing as a syllabic nasal (e.g. *klompen* ['klɒmpm]), as full [ən], or as [ə] with final *-n* deletion, reflecting Dutch influence.

These observations indicate that contemporary Bildts shows layered variation associated with contact with Frisian and Dutch. At the same time, the lowering of /ɛɪ̯/ suggests that not all variation in Bildts is contact-driven, highlighting Bildts as a valuable test case for disentangling contact-induced and internally-driven change in minority languages.

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## Structural Innovation in Heritage Odia Adjectives under Telugu Contact: From Atomic aPs to CPs

Adjectives constitute a structurally and semantically complex category, often ranking among the most vulnerable lexical classes in heritage grammars (Polinsky, 2005). Given their status as syntactic adjuncts, adjectives tend to be structurally peripheral and thus more prone to variability and reanalysis. This study investigates adjectival restructuring in Heritage Odia (HO), an Eastern Indo-Aryan language, spoken in the Telugu-dominant context of Hyderabad. Telugu, a Dravidian language, exhibits typologically distinct adjectival strategies, providing a contact environment rich in structural contrast. Despite sustained exposure to atomic adjectival forms in the home domain, **HO** speakers exhibit systematic reanalysis of both attributive and predicative adjectives. These patterns suggest that adjectival domains in **HO** are not merely sites of simplification, but loci of contact-induced syntactic innovation.

Against this backdrop, the study addresses the core question of how susceptible adjectival structure is to heritage-induced change. Specifically, it asks how typological contrasts between Odia's aP-based modifiers and Telugu's CP-based Reduced Relative Clauses (RRC) (cf. Cinque, 2010) shape the restructuring of adjectives in Heritage Odia. This study challenges the assumption that syntactic change in heritage languages is limited to simplification, showing instead that contact can also give rise to systematic complexification through reanalysis.

**Methodology.** Data were collected from 16 speakers of Heritage Odia through a multi-stage process: semi-structured elicitation tasks involving translation prompts and visual stimuli; a 15-item acceptability judgment task (rated from least to most acceptable); and follow-up metalinguistic probing to assess intuitions about the naturalness and completeness of adjectival constructions.

### Findings from Heritage Odia

**1. Attributive Adjectives: From aPs to CPs.** In Baseline Odia (BO), attributive adjectives are typically aPs within the DP, optionally marked by the suffixal adjectivizer *-ia* (cf. (1)). In contrast, **HO** displays the usage of periphrastic participial constructions resembling RRCs in addition to **BO** structures (cf. (2)).

- (1) *dardh-ia*      *loka*  
beard-ADJZ    person  
'Bearded person.' (Baseline Odia)
- (2) *dardhi-th-iba*      *loka*  
beard-be-INFV      person  
'The man who has a beard.' (Heritage Odia)

This shift reflects a reanalysis where adjectival modification is increasingly mapped onto relativizing templates, indicating an *incipient* CP-ization of aPs. This reanalysis could possibly be driven by: (i) Telugu contact, where adjectival modifiers often involve overt relativizers (e.g., *-ayina* structures) (cf. (3)) or (ii) the need for more input for *-ia* to be overtly marked in a0.

- (3) *aa teliv-ay-in-a ammayi na celli*  
 that smart-(to)become-PERF-RELZ girl my sister  
 ‘That smart girl is my sister.’ (Baseline Telugu)

**2. Predicative Adjectives: Phantom Copula Expectation.** In contrast to the structural reanalysis observed in attributive adjectival domains, predicative adjectives in **HO** show signs of grammatical instability not in form, but in *perceived acceptability*. In **BO**, predicative adjectives regularly appear without overt copular support, particularly in the present tense as seen in (4). These structures, though morphosyntactically simple and grammatical in **BO**, are frequently judged ‘incomplete or deficient’ by **HO** speakers citing the absence of: (i) the classifier *-ta* and (ii) an overt copula *acch-i* ‘be.PRES-3SG’. **HO** speakers prefer the structure (5) with an overt copula.

- (4) *se jhia sundara*  
 that girl pretty  
 ‘That girl is pretty.’ (Baseline Odia)
- (5) *se jhia-ta sundara acch-i*  
 that girl-CLF pretty be.PRES-3SG  
 ‘That girl is pretty.’ (Heritage Odia)

Given this structural pattern, an important question arises: Is the overt copula in predicative adjectival constructions in Heritage Odia the result of reduced input in the heritage setting, or does it reflect transfer from the L2-dominant language, Telugu, which systematically employs an overt copula in such contexts (see (6))?

- (6) *aa aamayi andam-ay-in-a-di*  
 that girl beauty-(to)become-PERF-REL-3FSG  
 ‘That girl is pretty.’ (Baseline Telugu)

**Discussion.** Polinsky (2005) identifies adjectives as the weakest among contentive word classes in heritage grammars, often undergoing attrition in comprehension and simplification in production. In Heritage Odia (HO), however, I observe the opposite trend: structural enrichment, where simple aPs are reanalyzed as CPs resembling RRCs, as in (8). This structural shift occurs despite consistent input of atomic adjective forms in the home domain, pointing to contact-induced restructuring under L2 dominance from Telugu. These CPs (such as (8)) frequently co-occur with degree modifiers like *besi* ‘very’, a canonical diagnostic of adjectival projection (Baker 2003).

- (7) *besi/ati budhimaan jhia*  
 very intelligent girl  
 ‘The very intelligent girl.’ (Baseline Odia)
- (8) *besi/ati budhimaan-th-iba jhia*  
 very intelligent-be-INFV girl  
 ‘The very intelligent girl.’ (Heritage Odia)

I propose that such reanalysis reflects not attrition but innovation under contact, where the grammar accommodates increased structural complexity. These findings challenge the assumption that heritage grammars prioritize economy, highlighting instead how contact and internal grammatical dynamics jointly drive syntactic reconfiguration.

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## **Language contact and language shift effects in endangered varieties of the Balkans**

The Balkans have long been regarded as a significant area of ethnic and linguistic contact within diverse multilingual settings. Most situations of language contact in the modern Balkans appear to be polyglossic, involving hierarchical relationships between languages and sometimes functional differentiations for them (Lüpke 2016: 41). However, a few relatively balanced, or non-polyglossic contact situations without hierarchical relationships among the languages involved (see Lüpke 2016; Singer & Harris 2016) can be found in modern times. Many researchers argue that, in the past, such situations played an important role in the development of shared Balkan linguistic features (Friedman & Joseph 2017).

Using the parameter of linguistic dominance (LD), two types of Balkan polyglossic settings can be distinguished depending on whether L1 or L2 is dominant within the community. The first type is illustrated by the Slavic-speaking villages of Golloborda in Albania (Slavic as L1 [LD], Albanian as L2) and Albanian communities in North Macedonia (Albanian as L1 [LD], Macedonian as L2). The second type is characterized by a turnover of linguistic dominance and a tendency towards the erosion of the situation's polyglossic character which may further result in a language shift to L2. This pattern is observed (or was observed until recently) in the village of Boboshtitsa in Albania (Slavic as L1, Albanian as L2 [LD]) and in the village of Mandritsa in Bulgaria (Albanian as L1, Bulgarian as L2 [LD]), as well as in various Balkan Romance communities (Arumanian, Istro-Rumanian and Megleno-Rumanian as L1, with language of the surrounding majority population as L2 [LD]).

In our study we suggest that, in general, situations of different types may (gradually) develop one into another in the following way: non-polyglossic > polyglossic with L1 dominance > polyglossic with L2 dominance > language shift. Contact-induced and shift-induced changes may occur at each stage of this development. However, not all stages in this sequence are obligatory. Language shift is not an inevitable outcome of situations characterized by L2 dominance: in some cases, such as Istro-Rumanian, the tendency towards shift may be stopped, and the maintenance of the subdominant L1 may continue for a long time.

A polyglossic situation with L1 dominance may serve as the starting point, as was probably the case in Mandritsa. Moreover, the sociolinguistic complexities of this situation most likely promoted both borrowing among L1 speakers and shift-induced interference among L2 speakers of the local Albanian variety (see details in Morozova 2024).

The main goal of the paper is to analyze contact-related phenomena in speech communities, in which the community's first language is both sociolinguistically and linguistically dominated by the language of the surrounding population and can be considered vulnerable or endangered. In such endangered varieties, one may observe contact-induced phenomena that are quite rare in cross-linguistic terms, such as morphological borrowing (Gardani et al. 2015). The borrowing of bound morphemes, along with the replication of functional morphological patterns, often complicates and obscures the structure of the recipient language. Compare, for example, the development of a Slavic-type aspect in Istro-Rumanian as a result of borrowing of Slavic aspectual prefixes (1) and suffixes (2), as well as the borrowing of Bulgarian dative pronominal clitics in the Albanian variety of Mandritsa. In the latter case, clitics are used in verb phrases to mark indirect objects, alongside the corresponding Albanian clitics (3), and in noun phrases to mark possessors, where they occur as intraclitics in non-

nominative nominal forms (4). Particular attention will be given to whether and how the abovementioned phenomena interrelate with phenomena traditionally associated with language attrition. Having in mind Aikhenvald's (2006: 5) metaphor of "layered" languages, which often display successive "layers" of innovative influence from outside, we will also try to consider the possibility of "layered" language contact and language shift effects emerging at different stages of development from one type of situation to another.

## Examples

### (1) Istro-Rumanian

*tal'ă*                      *potal'ă*  
cut.IPFV.INF      cut.PFV.INF  
'to cut' (Adamou & Sobolev 2025)

### (2) Istro-Rumanian

*jeşi*                              *jeşivuî*  
go\_out.PFV.INF              go\_out.IPFV.INF  
'to go out' (Adamou & Sobolev 2025)

### (3) Albanian variety of Mandritsa

*I=jép=him.*  
3.DAT=давать.PRS.3SG=3PL.DAT  
'[(S)he] gives them.' (Sokolova 1983: 105)

### (4) Albanian variety of Mandritsa

*mëm-ti-së*  
mother(F)-2SG.POSS-OBL.SG.DEF  
'to your mother' (Sokolova 1983: 108)

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### Language variation in the syntax of Basque allocutives

Basque is one of the most extensively studied allocutive languages (Haddican, 2018, p. 2). This system is subject to several syntactic constraints, described primarily by Oihartzabal (1993): allocutive forms are traditionally excluded from interrogative, exclamatory, and subordinate clauses. However, new tendencies violating these constraints have emerged among younger generations. Despite this change in progress, relatively few studies have examined the social factors conditioning syntactic variation in Basque allocutivity (but see Haddican et al., 2025).

The aim of this study is to analyze the social variables that condition such variation in the Basque dialect spoken in the town of Azpeitia. Azpeitia is one of the municipalities with the highest proportion of Basque speakers, and allocutive forms are used by 23.5% of the population (Soziolinguistika Klusterra, 2021), although this percentage is declining over time.

Data were collected through spontaneous conversations and translation-based questionnaires. A total of 48 informants were interviewed. Participants were paired in order to elicit spontaneous speech and reduce interview-related anxiety. The independent social variables considered were geography (the rural area of Urrestilla vs. the urban area of Azpeitia), age (elderly, adults, and young people), gender (women vs. men), community of practice (individuals who frequent Basque independentist bars, those who frequent bars with a rural atmosphere, and those without a clear preference), and interlocutor (the interviewee vs. the interviewer in spontaneous conversations, and the questionnaire context). The dependent variables were clause types: conditional, temporal, relative, interrogative, causal, completive, and indirect interrogative clauses.

Statistical analysis was conducted in R using a mixed-effects binomial logistic regression model implemented with the *lme4* package (Bates et al., 2015). Estimated means and confidence intervals were calculated using the *emmeans* package (Lenth & Piaskowski, 2025).

The results show that (1) the rural area of Urrestilla is more conservative than the urban area of Azpeitia; (2) young speakers are the most likely to violate syntactic restrictions; (3) gender and interlocutor are not significant predictors; and (4) speakers belonging to communities of practice without a clearly defined bar-atmosphere orientation are the most innovative, in line with Milroy's (1980) social network theory.

Moreover, these data provide evidence of syntactic regularization resulting from the declining vitality of the allocutive system in Basque.

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## **Acquiring a complex system in an endangered language: The intersection of child bilingualism, development, and language shift**

In this paper I focus on the role of children as future users and transmitters of endangered languages. Children acquiring an endangered language typically also need to acquire their nation's societally dominant language. As (at least) bilinguals, they need to acquire the structures of two languages while negotiating their growing physiological and cognitive competence, and also the social context of societal language shift (MacLeod C MacLeod, 2019). Here, I investigate the intersection of child development and bilingualism in the acquisition of a complex consonant contrast, focussing on lateral phonology in Scottish Gaelic. Gaelic has a large sonorant system including three phonemic laterals /l̪ l̪̥ l̪̥̥/, compared the single /l/ phoneme in the societally dominant language, English. I address the following research questions: 1) At what age do children produce the phonological contrasts for laterals which are typical of adult Gaelic? 2) Is there an interaction between age and bilingual background in lateral acquisition? 3) How can these results inform discussions about the nature of change or stability in endangered language structure?

The word-list data in this study were collected from 34 children aged 4–11, 15 adolescents aged 13–14, and 18 adults aged 21–80. The young people attended Gaelic Medium Education (a form of immersion education) on the Isle of Lewis, Scotland, and the adults were born and raised on Lewis in Gaelic-speaking homes. Analysis 1 focusses on production of word-initial and word-medial laterals in Gaelic from the 49 young people and 18 adults (1687 tokens). Analysis 2 focusses on a comparison between Gaelic and English laterals in data from 16 of the children and 12 of the adults (969 tokens). In both cases, I examine the distance between F2 and F1 as a measure palatalisation/velarisation (Iskarous C Kavitskaya, 2010), in a dynamic manner across the lateral duration. The high dimensional dynamic nature of the formant trajectories was reduced via Functional Principal Component Analysis (Gubian et al., 2015) to a series of functions, the first of which captured 70–80% of the variation in the datasets. Scores from the first FPC were then analysed via mixed effects regression modelling which included phoneme, age, home language background, vowel context and two-way interactions. Language (Gaelic or English) was also included in Analysis 2.

Analysis is ongoing. Based on previous work, I hypothesise that there will be differences among adult and child speech, with children younger than 7 years old less likely to produce a three-way phonemic contrast in Gaelic. In adult speech, adults produce English laterals differently from all Gaelic laterals (Nance C Kirkham, 2024). However, I predict that categories will be less distinct in child speech with no significant differences between Gaelic /l/ and English /l/ data. The results are discussed with reference to physiological factors in child speech development which render the production of linguistically complex consonants challenging until later childhood (Lin C Demuth, 2015), and also the bilingual production of laterals in multilingual societies (Sim C Post, 2026). I also discuss longer acquisition trajectories in bilingual contexts such as societies where language shift is ongoing (Kennard C Lahiri, 2017). These results and the outcomes of child production in endangered language education have implications for future language structures. I discuss the speaker pipeline from child to adolescent to adult Gaelic user and lack of a straightforward relationship between generation and language change in language shift contexts.

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## Variation and change in demonstrative determiners in Sümi: A corpus study

Trans-Himalayan languages show considerable structural variation in the ordering of noun phrase elements (Dryer 2008). While the position of adjectives and relative clauses relative to nouns is often linked to semantic or pragmatic properties of the modifiers (e.g. Grunow-Hårsta 2014), less has been written on principles driving variable ordering of demonstratives in these languages. In this talk, I explore variation in demonstrative determiners in corpus data from Sümi (glottocode: sumi1235) and what this can tell us about processes of change in the language.

Demonstrative determiners in Sümi have traditionally been described as postnominal (Shreehar 1980: 87–88; Teo 2019: 42). However, the distribution of demonstratives in corpus data (Teo 2024) shows a more complicated picture. While postnominal demonstratives are frequent (1), prenominal demonstratives are also attested (2), evidencing that demonstrative ordering is more flexible than previously characterised.

- (1) 0044\_doreco\_sumi1235\_ABT3-HC1\_AZ2\_pearstory01-A  
 [axathi **ti** kümtsü] ayeghi=lo iluqi-ve=ke=lo  
 fruit **MED** all earth=LOC fall-VM=NMLZ=LOC  
 ‘all the fruits fell down on the ground and...’
- (2) 0003\_doreco\_sumi1235\_ABT3-IA1\_pearstory01-A  
 [**ti** axathi] xo-a=ke  
**MED** fruit pluck-IPFV=NMLZ  
 ‘was plucking the fruit’

A further locus of variation is the form of the demonstrative itself. Demonstrative determiners in the data take one of three forms: a short form (1,2), a long form constructed by affixing *-pa* to the short form (3), or a long form with a definite marker (4). The difference between the short and long forms was linked to demonstratives functioning as determiners or pronominally (Teo 2019: 47, 62–63); however, all three forms are found both within noun phrases and as pronouns. This suggests that different principles underlie the choice of demonstrative form than a simple distinction of function.

- (3) 0053\_doreco\_sumi1235\_ABT3-AA1\_RZ1\_pearstory01-A  
 [appu **tipa**]=wu akütsüqho iluqi-ve=ke=u  
 boy **MED**=POSS hat fall-VM=NMLZ=DEF  
 ‘that boy's hat which fell down’
- (4) 0038\_doreco\_sumi1235\_ABT3-KA2\_LJ1\_interview01-A  
 ikelo [**tipa-u** do]=lo amulhu iki ghi  
 and\_then **MED-DEF** time=LOC wind go\_down come  
 ‘wind came down during that time’

Initial results of the corpus study suggest that a complex interplay of factors affects both the position and the form of demonstrative determiners. Relator nouns and borrowings tend to co-occur with short prenominal demonstratives, while case marking tends to occur with postnominal definite forms. Other relevant factors such as givenness and the animacy of the referent also likely play a role. The position and form of demonstrative determiners will be modelled to see which factors are most meaningful in explaining the distribution of demonstratives we see in the corpus, including extralinguistic factors such as individual

differences. These results will be discussed in the context of ongoing lexicalisation and grammaticalisation patterns in Sümi to provide a more nuanced understanding of what kind of change the variation in demonstrative determiners could be reflecting.

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## Use of the progressive aspect marker with generic time reference in Yucatec Maya

**Background.** Yucatec Maya is an indigenous language spoken on the Yucatán peninsula in Mexico as well as in Belize. Most native Yucatec speakers are bilingual with Spanish, and the proportion of speakers among the population has been quickly declining (Blaha Pfeiler & Skopeteas 2022). Situations of language endangerment are conducive to language attrition, in the form of changes that result in the simplification and loss of grammatical (sub)systems (Thomason 2018; Tsunoda 2006; Polinsky 1995). One possible instance of incipient loss of aspectual distinction in Yucatec has been reported by Bohnemeyer (2002:265): The Yucatec progressive aspect, describing concrete ongoing events (1-a), normally contrasts with the imperfective, describing contexts of generic and habitual reference (1-b), but can be used at least by some speakers to also reference generic events, as an alternative to the imperfective (2). This could be a sign that Yucatec is undergoing a progressive-to-imperfective shift, a cross-linguistically well-attested grammaticalization phenomenon in which progressive aspect markers generalize to all imperfective con-texts (Dahl 1985; Deo 2015; Fuchs & Piñango 2019). The present study aims to determine whether the reported deviations from the prototypical use of the progressive in Yucatec Maya are systematically accepted by native speakers and to explore their implications.

- (1a) *Táan in xok-ik le periyoodiko=o'*  
 PROG A.1SG read-ICPL DEM newspaper=CL  
 'I am/was/will be reading the newspaper.'
- (1b) *Wáaj k-a baaxal y-éetel miis=a', k-u yaawat*  
 ALT IPFV-A.2 play A.3-with cat=CL IPFV-A.3 cry  
 'If you tease (lit. play with) a cat, it cries.' Bohnemeyer (2002:268,261)
- (2) *Bix u beet-ik le miis-o 'ob=o'?*  
 how A.3 do-ICPL[B.3SG] DEM cat-PL=CL  
 – K-u / Túun y-aawat.  
 IPFV-A.3 PROG:A.3 Ø-call.AP[ICPL]  
 'How (i.e. what kind of sound) do cats make? — They cry.' Bohnemeyer  
 (2002:265)

**Method.** Participants were asked for binary acceptability judgments (acceptable/inacceptable) of complex sentences. Each sentence consists of a main clause marked for either progressive or imperfective aspect, and a subordinate clause providing either generic or concrete time reference, resulting in 4 different combinations of main clause aspect and subordinate clause type. 16 lexicalizations of the target sentences were distributed over 4 lists so that each participant judged 4 different instances of each of the 4 target constructions. The targets were presented alternating in a pseudo-random order with 48 filler sentences of a similar complex structure.

**Results.** Responses were analyzed using a generalized linear mixed model with factors Aspect (PROG vs. IPFV) and Context (conditional (generic reference) vs. temporal (concrete reference)). The interaction effect of Context and Aspect was found to be significant ( $\beta=4.4856$ ,  $SE=0.4621$ ,  $z=-9.706$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), reflecting that IPFV was preferred in contexts of generic reference and PROG with concrete reference. Additionally, simple-effects analyses revealed

that the PROG-IPFV difference was substantially larger in temporal clauses ( $\beta = 2.48$ ) than the reverse difference in conditional clauses ( $\beta = 2.01$ ). Thus, beyond a reversal in direction, the magnitude of the aspectual contrast was attenuated in conditionals, supporting an extension of the progressive to contexts of generic reference. We will discuss this shift in light of the current linguistic situation of variation and change in Yucatec Maya (Blaha Pfeiler & Skopeteas 2022).

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### **Congruent lexicalization in Moksha-Russian bilinguals**

In this paper, I examine the occurrence of Russian (Slavic, Indo-European) inflected verbs in otherwise Moksha (Finno-Ugric, Uralic) sentences in the speech of Moksha-Russian bilinguals (1). I show that such switches mostly occur in two contexts: (i) when structures in Moksha and Russian are congruent, and (ii) to fill a “gap” in the grammatical system of Moksha. I also argue that this type of code-switching (CS) is best analyzed as congruent lexicalization (CL) arising from a high level of convergence of two languages.

Adopting Muysken’s (2000) classification of CS types into insertion, alternation and CL, it is tempting to analyze a single Russian verb embedded in an otherwise Moksha clause as *insertion* — occurrence of an element from one language within a larger structure in another language. However, the switched part is not a constituent. Moreover, a structural approach (Treffers-Daller 1994, a.o.) to the matrix language (ML; Myers-Scotton 1993) would treat Russian as ML in (1). 21% of Russian verbs in Moksha sentences are modal verbs — the volitional verb *xot’et’* ‘want’ (2) and the general possibility modal *moč* ‘can’ (1). This distribution is significant in light of Moksha modality. Moksha expresses possibility primarily via passive morphology (3), but this strategy is restricted to ability and opportunity readings, excluding deontic and epistemic modality (Stenin 2018). Russian modal verbs therefore occupy a functional niche where Moksha lacks a fully equivalent finite verbal strategy.

While non-inflecting Russian predicatives, such as *možna* ‘allowed’, may be considered as borrowings, verbs with Russian inflection (1)–(2) are definitely instances of CS, as borrowed verbs carry Moksha derivational and inflectional morphology (Koryakov & Kholodilova 2018: 11).

In contrast to possibility modals, the volitional modal verb has a Moksha counterpart (4). Still, the Russian inflected equivalent is used. This ease of CS can be facilitated by structural congruence: both Moksha and Russian volitional verbs select an infinitival complement. Switching thus does not disrupt the clause structure. More generally, Russian verbs occur precisely in contexts where their occurrence does not violate the morphosyntactic constraints of either language. In modal contexts, either a functional gap exists (possibility modals), or the two systems share compatible argument structure and complementation patterns (volition). As argued by Sebba (1998), CS constraints reflect structural congruence between the participating grammars.

Given the problemat�city of the insertional analysis of Russian verbs in Moksha sentences outlined above, I argue that they are instances of congruent lexicalization (CL) — a case when two languages share the structure, and the morphemes are freely taken from either of the two languages. The Moksha–Russian case is non-canonical because the languages are genetically unrelated, yet prolonged contact has led to substantial structural alignment (Backus 2005).

The correlation between (i) the absence of exact one-to-one correspondences in specific modal domains and (ii) the availability of shared structural configurations supports the view that this pattern reflects advanced bilingual convergence rather than incomplete acquisition or deficient competence. The latter is a possible reason for non-canonical CL (Lipsky 2014). Here, however, CL emerges as a structural outcome of sustained contact between two typologically distinct systems.

## Examples

- (1) *mez'ə ton mož-ešt'ejə-n t'ij-əm-s*  
 what 2SG can-NPST.2SG(R) DAT-2SG.POSS do-INF-ILL  
 'What can you do to me?' (Moksha Corpus)

- (2) *mon xoč-u martə-t pala-m-s*  
 1SG want-NPST.1SG(R) with-2SG.POSS kiss-INF-ILL  
 'I want to be kissing with you.' (Moksha Corpus)

- (3) *vas'ε pačkəd'-əv-s' kud-u aftobuz-sə*  
 Vasja get.somewhere-PASS-PST.3[SG] house-LAT bus-IN  
 i. 'Vasja was able to get home by bus.'  
 ii. \*'Vasja may have gotten home by bus'. {It was the time of the departure of the last bus.} (Stenin 2018: 537)

- (4) *l'en'ingrad-u jora-maz' sɛv-əm-s*  
 Leningrad-LAT want-PST.1.O.3.S.PL.S/O take-INF-ILL  
 'They wanted to take me to Leningrad.' (Moksha Corpus)

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### Main patterns of variation in the Votic inflectional system<sup>1</sup>

The paper examines morpho(phono)logical variation in Votic, a minor Finnic language whose last fluent L1 speaker died eight years ago. Variation in Votic has not previously been the subject of a dedicated study. Although scattered observations can be found in Votic grammars (above all Ariste 1968) and in papers on Votic inflection, the overall picture of variation remains poorly described.

The study has two goals. First, to describe the main cases of inflectional variation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Votic. Second, to analyse this variation in terms of its dynamics over the last hundred years and, accordingly, to assess it in the light of possible attritional processes.

The data come from the authors' own field recordings made between 2001 and 2018 from speakers of the Liivtšülä–Luuditsa variety of the Vaipooli dialect, as well as from existing publications on Votic (above all the grammars Ahlqvist 1856; Tsvetkov 2008 [1922]; Ariste 1968).

Among the five patterns of variation discussed, two concern verbal inflection and three concern nominal inflection.

1. Variation in the formation of the conditional mood. Votic has several conditional suffixes (*jzi*, *izi*, *jsizi*, *jajsi/jäjsi*, *jajsizi/jäjsizi*) whose distribution partly depends on inflectional class and is partly free, for example: *avitta-jsi-d* ~ *avitta-jsizi-d* 'help-COND-2SG', *maka-jzi-n* ~ *maka-jajsizi-n* 'sleep-COND-1SG', *tšüsü-jäjsi-d* ~ *tšüsü-jäjsizi-d* 'ask-COND-2SG'.

2. A set of verbs with the past tense marker *-zi* show variation between forms belonging to an inflectional class of two-stem verbs (i.e. verbs with a consonantal stem in the paradigm) and forms belonging to an inflectional class of one-stem verbs, e.g. *hooku-a* ~ *hookus-sâ* 'breathe-INF', *hoogu-ta* ~ *hookus-sa* 'breathe-PRS.3PL', *hoogu-tti* ~ *hookus-ti* 'breathe-PST.3PL', *hooku-ga* ~ *hookus-ka* 'breathe-IMP.2PL', etc.

3. In the Luuditsa variety there is alternation between two types of illative singular: a full form (with the marker *-se/-se*) and a short form (without this marker), e.g. *puhhesē* ~ *puhhe* 'tree.ILL', *vakkosē* ~ *vakko* 'basket.ILL', *veräjase* ~ *veräjä* 'gate.ILL', *tšättšüse* ~ *tšättšü* 'cradle.ILL'. In spontaneous speech the full form is relatively rare, but in controlled speech it is much more frequent.

4. Although Votic is described as forming the singular inessive from a strong-grade stem in the case of the consonants *p*, *t*, *k*, *s*, *ts* and *tš* (Ariste 1968: 23–24), the Luuditsa variety frequently shows variation between geminate and single consonants in this form: *luzikkez* ~ *luzikez* 'spoon.INE', *kuppiz* ~ *kupiz* 'cup.INE', *nurkkez* ~ *nurkez* 'corner.INE'.

5. In the oblique plural, many nouns demonstrate variation in the diphthongs formed by the stem vowel and the plural marker, e.g. *härmij* ~ *härmäj* 'hoarfrost.PL.PART', *perkelij* ~ *perkelej* 'devil.PL.PART', *ublikkaj* ~ *ublikkoj* 'sorrel. PL.PART', etc.

All these types of variation are found at both the intraspeaker and interspeaker levels, i.e. variation can occur in the speech of the same individual, yet each speaker displays personal preferences for particular forms.

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Our analysis leads to the following conclusions. First, some of these alternations are already attested in earlier sources and therefore cannot be treated as innovations of recent decades. Second, the development of at least three of the five variation types is triggered — to a greater or lesser extent — by the neighbouring Ingrian language. Thus, in Luuditsa Votic, morphological variation is not a result of attrition and/or of the shift of Votic speakers to Russian but should be considered as the language's own development along with regular contact-induced changes.

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## Variation and Change in Istriot: the Case of *uni*

This research focuses Istriot, an endangered Romance variety often regarded as a remnant of pre-Venetian Adriatic Romanity spoken by some 400 people in several villages scattered across southwestern Istria, in today's Croatia. In particular, it presents a synchronic investigation into the grammaticalization of Istriot *uni/une* into a plural indefinite quantifier/determiner, a novelty in the Italo-Romance domain. Prior research (Giudici & Zanini 2021) suggests that its use is increasingly acceptable beyond the grammaticalizing context of *pluralia tantum* nouns, especially to younger speakers. Comparing this situation with the stages typical of the crosslinguistic development of indefinites, as described in Heine (1997) and Haspelmath (1997), they suggest that *uni/une* may be shifting from what Heine calls “specific markers” to “non-specific markers” in a development that would ultimately lead to “generalized markers” such as Spanish *unas/unos*. Furthermore, given the presence of indefinite plural markers derived from the numeral *one* in the surrounding Croatian and Chakavian varieties (Kalsbeek 1998; Leko 2009; Corbett 2019) they propose that the complexification of the Istriot system may be an example of pattern borrowing induced by centuries of contact (Matras & Sakel 2007; Sakel 2007).

Using psycholinguistic experiments, this study aims to expand and test this prediction: if it is in fact grammaticalizing, *uni* will show signs of spreading towards non-specific reference, as well as from *pluralia tantum* to other noun classes, especially among younger speakers. In order to pinpoint the exact location of *uni* on the implicational hierarchy of indefinite reference, the smallest contrast, that between *specific known* and *specific unknown* indefinites (Haspelmath 1997) is operationalized. In many languages, including both English and Istriot, this contrast is only visible in context, as in the difference between the following examples:

- (1) *Somebody* called while you were away: guess who!
- (2) I heard *something*, but I couldn't tell what kind of sound it was. (Haspelmath 1997: 2)

Through a combination of self-paced reading and interpretation tasks, the acceptability and processing time of *uni* will be tested in both specificity contexts and with both noun classes. Higher ratings and shorter delays are expected in *specific known* contexts and with *pluralia tantum* nouns, as well as among younger speakers. Thus, the combination of *specific known* contexts and *pluralia tantum* nouns will have the highest ratings and shortest delays. However, due to the influence of *pluralia tantum* as the grammaticalizing context, we also predict an interaction between *pluralia tantum* nouns and *specific unknown* contexts, such that this combination receives higher ratings and requires shorter processing relative to the *plural noun* and *specific unknown* combination. Moreover, the research consists of two separate experiments, one conducted in Istriot and one in Italian, offering a comparative approach to a related and neighboring language in which this element is unavailable, as well as a testing ground for the instrument itself before the very limited pool of Istriot speakers is tested. While Italian speakers may show some sensitivity to the *specific known/specific unknown* distinction, the absence of *uni* in Italian should lead to lower ratings and longer processing times across the board, serving as a baseline of comparison.

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## **Italian language and Germanic minorities in the Western Alps: Linguistic erosion in the Walser community of Gressoney**

The Walser community of Gressoney is marked by a distinctive situation of language contact and change, as it is an Alemannic minority wedged into the Romance continuum between Gallo-Italian and Franco-Provençal varieties in the Aosta Valley. If up to the early twentieth century one can argue there was isolation from the Romance area, thereafter the community broke its ties with Germany and Switzerland and opened up to the Romance world. In terms of repertoire, it began with a diglossic arrangement in which the dialect (*titsch*) functioned as the low variety and German as the high variety (Giacalone Ramat 1979; Zürrer 2009: 86). Over the course of the twentieth century, the situation shifted to include first Piedmontese as a low variety alongside *titsch* and then Italian and German as high varieties (Zürrer 2009: 100). Subsequently, the repertoire expanded to include French and Italian as high varieties, while among the low varieties a dilalia emerged between the Walser varieties (alongside Piedmontese) and Italian (cf. Giacalone Ramat 1979).

The consequences for *titsch* are decisive and accelerate its change: the absence of German as a roof language frees it from normative pressure and produces a condition midway between contact-induced language change and the progressive abandonment of the Germanic variety in favor of Italian (Saracco 2024).

This contribution aims to examine contact-induced change from Italian in Gressoney *titsch* within the class of modal verbs. As already shown, the *titsch* system of modals is undergoing a reorganization and simplification modelled on the Italian modal system: regression in the use of *titsch mògò* (German *mögen*) to express desire and strong volition in favor of the verb *welle* ‘to want,’ which has by now become the only fully volitional modal. The same simplification can be observed in the realm of deontic and epistemic possibility: compared with the German dichotomy *können/dürfen*, today *titsch* prefers the single *chònnò* for both values, exactly like Italian *potere* (even for the expression of permission).

What we now wish to investigate here is whether Italian is also influencing, at the syntactic level, the use of modals in *titsch*: in particular, it is necessary to determine whether the so-called Germanic “sentence bracket” (finite modal in second position and lexical infinitive in clause-final position) is still alive, or whether the Italian sequence modal + infinitive is gaining the upper hand. The analysis will draw both on the corpus collected and digitized by the CLiMAIp project at the University of Turin (Gaeta *et al.* 2022) and on an *ad hoc* questionnaire administered to the Gressoney Walser community.

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## **The decay of nominal inflection types in language shift: A corpus-based study of Ulcha (Tungusic)**

The paper deals with variation in nominal inflection attested in Ulcha. Ulcha is a critically endangered Tungusic language spoken in the Lower Amur region (Russia). All its speakers are of older generations (born not later than in the 1950s), all are fluent in Russian and use mostly Russian in their everyday communication.

Ulcha nouns are inflected for case and optionally take possessive affixes. There are two main nominal inflection types: stems ending in vowels (vowel-stems) vs. stems ending in *-n* (n-stems) behave differently, see Table 1. The difference is the best visible in the accusative and locative cases, as well as in the nominative 1SG and reflexive forms, while in the nominative non-possessed and nominative 1PL, 2p, 3p forms the distinction is neutralized. Vowel-stems are more frequent than n-stems.

However, this system is not stable. Both in the pre-shift Ulcha and in the modern Ulcha speech, stem mismatches are attested: n-stems sometimes behave as vowel-stems (1) and vice versa (2). A probable trigger of this mixing process is loss of the vowel nasality opposition, which had started already in the pre-shift Ulcha. This phonological change neutralized the distinction between vowel-stems and n-stems in the nominative case (*gasa* ‘duck’ vs. *gasã* ‘village’ → *gasa* ‘duck’ = *gasa* ‘village’).

The paper aims to reveal the factors that condition the observed variation in nominal stems and to check whether the variation increases in language shift settings. First, elicited data from younger speakers show a striking variation in this domain (Oskolskaya & Stoyanova 2019). Second, high variation of any kind was reported to be a general effect of language shift (see, e.g., Dorian 2010).

The study is corpus-based: I use the sample of noun forms (3,519 forms in total) extracted from the glossed collection of Ulcha texts (46,701 tokens) recorded by Taisia Petrova in the 1920s-1930s (Petrova 1936), by Orest Sunik in the 1960s-1970s (Sunik 1985), and by the author in the 2010s. The oldest narrators were born in the 1880s (pre-shift speakers), while the youngest ones were born in the 1950s (speakers highly affected by language shift). The information on the expected stem type comes from the dictionary by Sunik (1985), based on pre-shift Ulcha data.

As a statistical method, I use binomial logistic regression with mixed effects, which gives an opportunity to assess the impacts of several different factors in their interplay.

The preliminary results of the study are as follows. Structural factors that predispose to stem mixing are stem type (n-stems behave as vowel-stems more often than vice versa), stem frequency (less frequent stems are more affected), and noun form (for n-stems, the forms in which the difference between inflection types is the most visible, as well as instrumental forms are more prone to stem mixing, while dative forms are more stable; for vowel-stems, there is no significant effect).

The language shift effect is observed as well. Younger speakers, i.e. those affected by language shift, mix stem types more frequently than older speakers. However, the significant effect is attested for n-stems only. Younger speakers inflect n-stems as vowel-stems more often than older speakers, while the rate of vowel-stems inflected as n-stems does not significantly change. In other words, the rate of transitions from the less frequent stem type to the default one increases, while the rate of transitions from the default stem type to a more marginal one

remains stable. Thus, the variation in nominal inflection increases in language shift settings; however, this is true only for the variation that leads to regularization and simplification of the inflection system.

Table 1. The Ulcha noun paradigm (a fragment)

|            | vowel-stem<br><i>gasa-</i> ‘duck’ | n-stem<br><i>gasan-</i> ‘village’ |
|------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| NOM        | <i>gasa</i>                       | <i>gasa</i> (< <i>gasã</i> )      |
| ACC        | <i>gasa-wa</i>                    | <i>gasam-ba</i>                   |
| DAT        | <i>gasa-du</i>                    | <i>gasan-du</i>                   |
| INS        | <i>gasa-d’i</i>                   | <i>gasan-d’i</i>                  |
| LAT        | <i>gasa-ti</i>                    | <i>gasan-ti</i>                   |
| LOC        | <i>gasa-la</i>                    | <i>gasan-dula</i>                 |
| PROL       | <i>gasa-ki</i>                    | <i>gasan-ki</i>                   |
| DEST       | <i>gasa-d’u-(poss)</i>            | <i>gasan-d’u-(poss)</i>           |
| NOM.1SG    | <i>gasa-i</i>                     | <i>gasam-bi</i>                   |
| NOM.RFL.SG | <i>gasa-i</i>                     | <i>gasam-bi</i>                   |
| NOM.RFL.PL | <i>gasa-wari</i>                  | <i>gasam-bari</i>                 |
| NOM.3SG    | <i>gasa-ni</i>                    | <i>gasan-ni</i>                   |

### Examples

- (1a) n-stem inflected as vowel-stem

*Tara ti xaj-wa-n, ti amba-wa-n*  
 then that what-ACC-3SG that evil.spirit-ACC-3SG  
*puŋnə-čü-m=gdəl, mura-m puŋn-i-n*  
 drive.away-IPFV-CVB.SG=CONTR cry-CVB.SG drive.away-PRS-3SG  
 ‘Then she drives away his evil spirits, she drives them away with her scream.’

(DSP\_20180731\_MyGrandmaShamanYeneke\_nar)

- (1b) n-stem inflected regularly

*Purə ambam-ba-ni bu: u:-w-xa-pu*  
 taiga evil.spirit-ACC-3SG 1PL get.in-CAUS.MOT-PST-1PL  
 ‘We took a taiga evil spirit aboard [our boat].’

(XVCH\_19660802\_TaleAdoptedSon\_flk)

- (2a) vowel-stem inflected as n-stem

*Jaqtam-ba, burum-bə, xaj,*  
 toy.arrow-ACC bow-ACC what  
*ti puru-səl-du-j and’u-xa-n*  
 that children-PL-DAT-RFL.SG make-PST-3SG  
 ‘He made arrows and bows for his children.’ (BOA\_20170730\_TaleTigers\_flk)

- (2b) vowel-stem inflected regularly

*Buri-wə, d’abdu-wa ič-əsti=nu?*  
 bow-ACC arrow-ACC see-PRS.NEG.2SG=Q  
 ‘Can’t you see the bow and arrow?’ (KSM\_194807\_TaleBaturi\_flk)

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*Claire Nance (Lancaster University)*

## **Livonian palatalization: acoustic characteristics and realization across three generations**

In the current study, we provide an acoustic description of Livonian palatalization, and examine its realization across three generations of Livonian speakers. Additionally, we present a preliminary comparative analysis of Livonian palatalized consonants and Latvian palatal consonants. The data consist of test words elicited in read speech from speakers representing three generations: those born in the 1900s, 1970s, and 2000s.

Palatalization is a phonological process whereby consonants acquire secondary palatal articulation or shift their primary place to, or toward, the palatal region (e.g., Kochetov 2011). This process is typically triggered by a high front vowel /i/ or a glide /j/. The palatalized consonants in Livonian are /tʲ, dʲ, nʲ, lʲ, rʲ/. As in other Finnic languages, Livonian palatalization is primarily prepalatalized, affecting the quality of the preceding vowel, as reflected in higher F2 and lower F1 values due to coarticulation with a higher and more fronted tongue position. Livonian palatalization has also been described as having postpalatalization (e.g. Kettunen 1938, 1947; Posti 1942), meaning that, for example, in a consonant cluster, not only the place of articulation of the first alveolar consonant is affected by /i/, but also that of the following alveolar consonants.

We hypothesize that we will see a decrease in F2 and an increase in F1 values as the speakers get younger, indicating that the younger generation palatalizes less and the acoustic characteristics of Livonian and Latvian palatalization converge most strongly in the pronunciation of the younger generation.

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### **Phonetic change and social meaning: Trill variation in Basque and the performative context of *Libertimendua***

This paper examines the relationship between phonetic variation and language ideologies, focusing on trill production in Northern Basque. Basque–French bilingualism in this region has led to a reorganization of the trill system: the historically alveolar trill, formerly general throughout Basque, is progressively being replaced by the uvular one, particularly among young speakers (Mitzelena 1990 [1961]: 328; Hualde 2003: 32; Oñederra et al. 2014: 88–91). In this context, the aim of the study is to explore how this variation is perceived and ideologically evaluated by speakers themselves (Woolard & Schieffelin 1994), thereby constructing social meaning through phonetic variation (Eckert 2000: 9).

The study draws on two types of data: (i) everyday speech produced by young people from Hazparne (Labourd) and (ii) character representations in the 2024 Hazparne *Libertimendua*, a traditional theatrical performance associated with Carnival and characterized by parody and social critique (Luku 2022). Corpus (i) consists of semi-structured conversations (80 minutes) with participants in the *Libertimendua*, while corpus (ii) comprises approximately one hour of speech produced during the performance by 13 participants aged 16–30.

The perceptual analysis shows that in everyday interaction participants categorically use the uvular trill, whereas the alveolar one appears in the performance, where it indexes recognizable social types—particularly local elderly people, farmers, and speakers from the Southern Basque Country. These results indicate that the alveolar trill remains perceptually salient and is used as a phonetic resource with ideological value, associated with age, tradition, rurality, and geographical origin (Irvine & Gal 2000; Coupland 2007). The performative context of *Libertimendua* thus emerges as a privileged site for observing the articulation between phonetic change, language ideologies, and social meaning.

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**The influence of listener's mother tongue and genre on choosing Beserman, Russian, and Udmurt language units:  
A corpus-based study**

The Besermans are a small ethnic group (app. 2000 people) occupying the northwestern part of Udmurtia (Russian Federation) [Popova 1998]. Traditionally, Beserman has been treated as an Udmurt dialect. Now, there is an active public and scientific debate on its status, which has led to certain results at the state level [Ivanov 2025]. Vast majority of the Besermans consider the idiom they speak to be a distinct language. I've been observing it during 20+ years of fieldwork, and it coincides with the results of ethnostatistical research made by Sklyayev [1997]. This is — together with a considerably large corpus with sociolinguistic data (sex, year of birth, nationality) and a detailed dictionary — makes Beserman a good candidate for studying switching among Beserman, Udmurt, and Russian. Beserman multimedia corpus contains ca. 290 000 tokens recorded from 83 speakers, 10 of which are women who contributed at least 7000 words each (~one hour of speech). Vast majority of corpora texts belong to three following genres: natural dialogues (38.6%), experimental dialogues (38.3%) and monologues (22.9%) [Arkhangelskiy et al. 2003–2025; Arkhangelskiy et al.: to appear]; in other words, the corpus is relatively balanced from the point of view of the text type. The Tlex lexicographic database includes detailed articles for more than 6600 lemmata; each lemma is either tagged as Udmurt/Russian or untagged (i.e. Beserman). The labels for each lemma are given according to judgments of at least five Beserman speakers.

The nature of the Beserman data described above gives an opportunity to exclude the factors of age and sex and test the claim which the Besermans I work with often formulate themselves — namely, that they try to use rather the native language of the listener rather than their native Beserman. I extracted from the Beserman multimedia corpus the texts which include speech of those 10 women elder than 50 who mostly contributed to the corpus. Each of the texts was labeled according to listeners' mother tongue (this information is known by all the speakers), the language the listeners used (Beserman, Russian, or Udmurt), the degree of how active the listeners were during communication (active participating vs mainly listening vs silent presence). Then, all the words and grammatical constructions were annotated as Beserman, Russian, or Udmurt. The words were annotated according to the tags from the Tlex database or (in cases when the database lacked them) following the judgements of Beserman consultants we transcribed the texts with. The constructions were annotated in accordance with [Arkhangelskiy et al.: to appear] — namely, the constructions described in this grammar without a special mention about their supposed origin were labeled as Beserman, and the others were labeled as Udmurt or Russian on the basis of my knowledge of Udmurt and Russian grammars. For each text, the percent of Beserman, Russian, and Udmurt words and constructions were calculated. In the nearest future I am going to use multinomial logistic regression as the main method and  $\chi^2$  as an auxiliary exploratory test to check whether the share of Beserman, Russian, and Udmurt units correlates with the listener's mother tongue, the listener's involvement, and the genre of text, and present the results in my supposed talk.

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## Indirect speech in the Enets languages

This study discusses the types of quotations in Forest and Tundra Enets languages, focusing on the presence of the less typical indirect speech.<sup>1</sup>

Samoyedic languages favor direct speech when quoting one's previous statements in biclausal constructions. They usually lack indirect quotations, i.e. the ones that involve a person shift in the quoted sentence. According to Szeverényi — Sipőcz (2020) and Siegl (2013), in Nganasan and Forest Enets, the original utterance is reproduced verbatim, and is preceded or followed by a matrix verb that marks perspectivization. However, the *INEL Enets Corpus* (Shluinsky et al. 2025) contains examples where person shift can be attested<sup>2</sup>, and some of these also contain a conjunction (*štə* 'that', borrowed from Russian). These are typical characteristics of indirect speech (or free indirect speech, regarding the former one).

My study examines the possible reasons why indirect speech exists in Enets in opposition to one of its closest relatives, Nganasan. Based on the corpus data, Enets supports a theory mentioned by Szeverényi and Sipőcz (2020). According to their research on Nganasan and Mansi, languages with complex evidential systems are less likely to have biclausal (free) indirect speech. Even though Enets has two evidential suffixes, this system is not as complex as the one in Nganasan. Hence, Enets has more possibility to use indirect speech when affected by foreign influence. To elaborate on this idea, I will present all types of mono- and multiclausal quotations in Enets, and compare its system to the two aforementioned languages. I will also mention some factors to decide if the Enets indirect speech is more likely to be an innovation or not. As a result, a possible cross-linguistic pattern in developing indirect speech will be discussed.

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<sup>2</sup> This sentence type was also briefly mentioned in Shluinsky – Wagner-Nagy (2024) with a different focus.

Kathy Zaruba (*Leibniz-Zentrum Allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft (ZAS)*)

## **An exploration of morphosyntactic variation in Northeastern Neo-Aramaic Senaya**

Though language shift affects minority languages in indigenous and diasporic contexts alike, the geographic dispersal of endangered language communities poses particular analytical challenges to studies of linguistic variation and change, as diverse socio- and extralinguistic factors intensify individual variation while complicating its interpretation. This contribution seeks to enlighten discussions of idiosyncratic variation and systematic change in heritage languages in light of community displacement, prevailing multilingualism, monolingual normativity and elusive baselines resulting from it (cf. Evans 2001; Polinsky 2018; Rothman et al. 2023), by presenting initial insights from a mixed-methods documentation of Northeastern Neo-Aramaic Senaya spoken by U.S.-based heritage speakers.

While some varieties within the remarkably diverse Northeastern Neo-Aramaic (NENA) language group are relatively well-documented, Senaya — a geographically and sociolinguistically isolated variety with fewer than 200 speakers — remains understudied, despite exhibiting typological peculiarities that underscore its potential to illuminate processes of contact, shift, and variation in endangered heritage languages. Unlike other aspect-based agreement splits in Northeastern Neo-Aramaic likely to have emerged from contact with split-ergative Kurdish languages (Kalin C Van Urk 2015: 660), for instance, Senaya displays ‘partial agreement reversal’ (Kalin C Van Urk 2015) which, crucially, does not involve ergativity, and may thus provide valuable insight into distinct pathways of morphosyntactic development within NENA. Anecdotal evidence further suggests intragenerational variation in the use of a *-lee* affix in progressive marking (cf. Kalin 2012), challenging traditional generational models of language change and raising questions about the source and conditioning factors of such variability.

Though promising theoretically significant patterns, these observations remain fragmentary, highlighting the urgency of systematic documentation and need for methodological approaches that contextualize collected data to distinguish individual variation from systematic structural shift. Addressing this desideratum, this study employs a mixed-methods fieldwork design integrating narrative elicitation in Neo-Aramaic Senaya with systematic speaker profiling: fictional narratives using the Multilingual Assessment Instrument for Narratives (MAIN; Gagarina et al. 2019) are complemented by open-ended personal narratives to capture both structured and naturalistic language use. Adapted versions of the Heritage Language Experience questionnaire (HeLEx; Tomić et al. 2023) for sociolinguistic profiling; the Controlled Oral Word Association Task (COWAT; Benton 1969) and Crosslinguistic Lexical Tasks (CLTs; Haman, Łuniewska C Pomiechowska 2015) to assess lexical range in Senaya; and the Lexical Test for Advanced English Learners (LexTALE; Lemhöfer C Broersma 2012) measuring English proficiency and bilingual competence further record speaker characteristics to enhance the interpretability of the narrative production data.

The exploratory analysis examines a) the distribution of progressive marking across speakers and narrative contexts; b) whether variation clusters by generation, proficiency level or other sociolinguistic factors; and c) whether patterns suggest a stable system with variable realization versus competing grammars or ongoing structural simplification. Additionally, the study provides preliminary observations on the understudied domain of discourse marker use in heritage speakers of Neo-Aramaic. Discourse marker analysis offers complementary evidence for contact influence at the pragmatic level and may illuminate whether structural and pragmatic domains undergo parallel or independent shifts.

As an exploratory study, this contribution presents initial findings, analytical strategies, and theoretical considerations for understanding variation in heritage languages undergoing rapid shift. It contributes empirical data from an understudied NENA variety while offering methodological insights transferable to other small diaspora communities where variation is pronounced but speaker populations are too limited for traditional sociolinguistic sampling.

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### **Contact-induced changes of postverbal constructions in Western Yugur**

This study explores how postverbal constructions in Western Yugur change under the influence of its neighbouring languages.

Western Yugur is an endangered Turkic language spoken in northwestern China, with around 2,000 speakers. It has been in long-term contact with Chinese, Mongolic languages (Mongolian and Eastern Yugur), and Amdo Tibetan, among which the influences from Chinese are the most intensive. Almost all speakers of Western Yugur are bilingual in Chinese and there are massive Chinese lexical copies in the language. The community faces serious intergenerational transmission difficulties, as most speakers are now at least in their forties.

Postverbal construction is a term proposed by Johanson (2021), which denotes an analytic structure comprised of a lexical verb  $V_1$  and an auxiliary verb  $V_2$ , being linked up by a converb suffix. It generally corresponds to converb constructions or auxiliary constructions in other languages of the world under the scope of verbal complex predicates (Bisang et al. 2023).

By comparing our Western Yugur data collected with other Turkic languages and historical descriptions, we find that postverbal constructions in this language exhibit the following pat-terns.

- Certain Mongolic elements appear as cases of matter replications in the position of  $V_2$  of a postverbal construction of this language, see example (1 – 2). These were reflected in previous research.
- Certain Chinese elements appear as cases of pattern replications and, in some cases, even extend the functions of native  $V_2$ , see example (3 – 4). These are mostly found in our recent fieldwork data.
- Historically employed auxiliary verbs are no longer used today. For example, the verbs *pol-* ‘become’, *olār-* ‘stay’, *joz-* ‘get through’ introduced in Chen (2004: 206 – 207) are now reported as ungrammatical and incomprehensible. They are generally replaced by other native elements.

We propose both internal and external dynamics for explaining the development of postverbal constructions in this language. The loss and replacement of historical auxiliary verbs are driven by internal forces. In the meantime, there are also some changes driven by external factors, namely the contact with Mongolic languages and Chinese. Mongolic elements can appear in the position of  $V_2$ , yet Chinese elements cannot, because Mongolic and Turkic languages share similar typological structures of postverbal constructions. These elements were probably introduced into the language by bilingual speakers of Mongolic languages in history.<sup>1</sup> As for Chinese, there are barely any cases of matter replications in postverbal constructions, even though almost all Western Yugur speakers are bilingual in Chinese. It can be explained from the perspective of typological distance between Western Yugur and Chinese being too far for it to allow direct matter replications.

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<sup>1</sup> In fact, it is really difficult to find bilingual speakers of both Eastern Yugur and Western Yugur today.

## Examples

(1) case of Mongolic *šita-* appearing as a V<sub>2</sub>

*semen ite<sup>h</sup>-u                      tʃʒta-yan                      pa?*  
meal drink-CVB      POSTV.be.able-PTCP      Q  
‘Did everyone manage to get something to eat?’

(2) case of Mongolic *čata-* appearing as a V<sub>2</sub>

*suila-s-o                      jat-o-tə*  
suila-s-o                      jata-o-tə.  
catch-RECP-CVB      POSTV.be.unable-CONT-COP  
‘He can’t catch up to you.’

(3) case of calque of Chinese 听来 *tīnglái*, listen + come, ‘understand’

*ko                      aɣna-k                      ket-to*  
ko                      aɣna-p                      kel-to.  
s/he listen-CVB POSTV.come-PST  
‘S/he understood it.’

(4) case of calque of Chinese 说(起)来 *shuō(qǐ)lái*, speak + come, ‘speaking of which’

*jol-ya                      e<sup>h</sup>t-se                      la                      qajto                      la                      antay                      metɛar                      metɛar                      sej*  
road-DAT                      arrive-COND PRT                      everywhere                      PRT                      that                      small                      REDUP~vegetables  
*par-tə,                      am                      la                      te-kel-se                                           janjy-to.*  
to.be-COP                      now                      PRT                      say-POSTV.come-COND                      potato-COP  
‘When we got on the road, there were many small vegetables everywhere. Today we call them potatoes.’

## Abbreviations

COND — conditional; CONT — continuity of action; COP — copula; CVB — converb; DAT — dative; POSTV postverb; PRT — particle; PST — past; PTCP — participle; Q — question particle; RECP — reciprocal; REDUP — reduplication.

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