

Forest Enets and Tundra Enets: how similar/different are they and why?

Olesya Khanina, Andrey Shluinsky & Yuri Koryakov
(Institute of Linguistics, RAS)

Traditionally, Forest Enets and Tundra Enets have been called dialects (cf. Prokof'ev 1937, Tereščenko 1966, Labanauskas 2002, Sorokina 2010), though recently scholars have suggested them to be separate languages (Janhunen 2009, Salminen 1997, 2007, Siegl 2013). Culturally, the two linguistic communities are clearly distinct, have different self-dominations, and do not consider themselves as belonging to the same ethnic group. As our field experience has shown, the degree of mutual comprehensibility is not a neutral question and depends on the stance that a speaker takes at the moment of conversation, whether stressing the difference between the two ethnic groups or aiming at reaching his/her communicative goal. With this paper, we make an attempt to supply the discussion with more data, leaving the taxonomy issue aside for the moment.

Indeed, a full account of what differs the two varieties has never been provided: Enets scholars have been referring to a handful of evident diverging reflexes of Proto-Northern-Samoyedic phonemes and a dozen of non-cognate lexemes with identical meanings, without going any further (Prokofjev 1937, Tereščenko 1966, Helimski 1985). (Helimski 2007) described recent phonological changes in Forest Enets that had made the two language varieties sound even more unlike than 100 years ago.

While preparing a pan-dialectal grammar of Enets, we have studied in details dozens of Enets morphological, morphosyntactic, and syntactic structures, and can now claim that they are different for the two Enets lects only in a surprisingly small number of cases. So, whereas the phonologies of Forest Enets and Tundra Enets suggest a split of at least several hundred years ago, and lexicostatistical calculations go even further by dating the split ca. one thousand years ago (Koryakov 2018), the match between the two Enets grammars is so striking that it contradicts this scenario.

On the other hand, analysis of the data on linguistic geography and history of the two Enets communities in the last three hundred years (e.g. Patkanov 1912, Materialy 1926, Ostrovskih 1929, Dolgih 1946, 1960, 1970; Vasil'ev & Simčenko 1963, Vasil'ev 1979, 1982) has prompted us to suggest a very tentative hypothesis of secondary convergence in the 19th century of the once more distinct Enets lects, followed by a secondary divergence in the beginning of the 20th century. If, for several generations, the two Enets groups shared the same territory and spoke languages which were mutually comprehensible (at least after some limited experience), it is not so surprising that this language contact resulted in massive morphosyntactic and syntactic calquing producing almost identical grammars of Forest and Tundra Enets that we see in the 20th century.

In the oral paper, we will complement our hypothesis with a catalogue of all features that separate the two Enets varieties and with linguistic maps reconstructing changes in the territories of the two ethnic groups in the last 300 years.

References

- Dolgikh, Boris O. 1946. O rodovom sostave i rasselenii èncev [On clan composition and distribution of Enets]. *Sovetskaja ètnografija*. No. 4. P. 109–124.
- Dolgikh, Boris O. 1960. *Rodovoj i plemennoj sostav narodov Sibiri v XVII v.* [Clan and tribal composition of peoples of Siberia in 17th century]. Moscow: Izd-vo AN SSSR.
- Dolgikh, Boris O. 1970. *Očerki po ètničeskoj istorii nencev i èncev* [Essays on ethnic history of Nenets and Enets peoples]. Moscow: Nauka.
- Helimski, Eugen. 1985. Die Feststellung der dialektalen Zugehörigkeit der encischen Materialien, In *Dialectologia Uralica: Materialien der ersten Internationalen Symposions zur Dialektologie der uralischen Sprachen*. Hrsg. von W. Veenker (VdSUA 20). Wiesbaden, 1985, 303-308.
- Helimski, Eugen. 2007. Fonetika i morfologija èneckogo jazyka v uslovijah jazykovogo sdviga [Enets phonetics and morphology in the condition of a language shift], In Vakhtin, Nikolay B. (ed.). *Jazykovye izmenenija v uslovijah jazykovogo sdviga* [Language change caused by language shift]. Saint-Petersburg: Nestor, 213-224.

- Janhunen, Juha. 2009. Proto-Uralic — what, where, and when? In *The Quasiquicentennial of the Finno-Ugrian Society*. № 258, 57–78.
- Koryakov, Yuri. 2018. Problema jazyk ili dialect i samodijskie jazyki [Language vs. dialect and Samoyedic languages]. *Uralo-Altajskie Issledovanija*, 2018 [in print].
- Labanauskas, Kazimir I. 2002. *Rodnoe slovo: èneckie pesni, skazki, istoričeskie predanija, tradicionnye rasskazy, mify* [Mother tongue: Enets songs, tales, legends, traditional stories, myths]. St. Petersburg: Prosveščenie
- Materialy 1926 - Materialy pripoljarnoj perepisi 1926-1927 gg. v Sibirskom krae. Issue 1. Spisok naseljonnyx mest russkogo i tuzemnogo naselenija Turuhanskogo kraja i tuzemnogo naselenija okrugov Kirenskogo, Tulunovskogo i Irkutskogo [Materials of 1926-1927 Polar census in Siberian region. Issue 1. List of settlements of Russian and native population of Turukhansk district and native population of Kirensk, Tulunovsk and Irkutsk districts]. Krasnojarsk: Sibkrajstatotd.
- Ostrovskih, Pjotr E. 1929. K voprosu “o naselenii Tajmyrskogo poluostrova” [On issue of population of Taymyr peninsula]. *Severnaja Azija*. № 2. P. 77–82.
- Patkanov, Serafim K. 1912. *Statističeskie dannye, pokazyvajušie plemennoj sostav naselenija Sibiri, jazyk i rody inovercev* [Statistic data showing tribal composition of Siberia population, language and clans of non-Christians], vol. 2. Saint-Petersburg.
- Prokof'ev, Georgij N. 1937. “Èneckij (enisejsko-samojedskij dialect) [Enets (Yenisei-Samoyedic dialect)]”, In *Jazyki i pis'mennost' narodov Severa* [Languages and writing systems of the peoples of the North]. ed. by Georgij N. Prokofjev, 75-90. Moscow & Leningrad: Uchpedgiz.
- Salminen, Tapani. 1997. A key to Enets morphology. (Morphologisches Wörterbuch des Enzischen von Tibor Mikola.), In *Finnisch-Ugrische Forschungen*, 54, 213–219.
- Salminen, Tapani. 2007. Europe and North Asia, In Moseley Ch. (ed.). *Encyclopedia of the world's endangered languages*. London: Routledge, 211—282.
- Siegl, Florian. 2013. *Materials on Forest Enets, an indigenous language of Northern Siberia*. Helsinki: Société Finno-Ougrienne.
- Sorokina, Irina P. 2010. *Èneckij jazyk* [Enets]. St.Petersburg: Nauka.
- Tereščenko, Natal'ja M. 1966. Eneckij jazyk [Enets]. In E. Lytkin & Klara E. Majtinskaja (eds.), *Jazyki narodov SSSR: Finno-ugorskie i samodijskie jazyki* [Languages of the USSR: Fenno-Ugric and Samoyedic languages], 438–457. Moscow: Nauka.
- Vasil'ev, Vladimir I. 1979. *Problemy formirovanija severo-samodijskih narodnostej* [Problems of forming North Samoyedic peoples]. Moscow: Nauka.
- Vasil'ev, Vladimir I. 1982. Nency i èncy [Nenets and Enets peoples], In *Ètničeskaja istorija narodov Severa* [Ethnic history of peoples of the North]. Moscow: Nauka.
- Vasil'ev, Vladimir I., Simčenko, Jurij B. 1963. Sovremennoe samodijskoe naselenie Tajmyra [Modern Samoyedic population of Taymyr]. *Sovetskaja ètnografija*, No. 3. P. 9–20.