

Argument encoding in Enets non-finite clauses¹

This study uses data of an Enets corpus, which includes natural texts from both Forest and Tundra Enets and consists of ca. 150 000 words/ca. 30 hours, to analyze possible ways to encode core clausal arguments belonging to non-finite predicates. Enets has several participles (1, 5), converbs (2), and a nominalization (3–4, 6) which are used to build dependent clauses: relative (1), adverbial (2, 5–6), and complement clauses (3–4).

- (1) tezaʔ tɔɔ-j-niʔ sexeri me-ɔn
 F now reach(pfv)-PTCP.ANT-OBL.SG.1DU road in-PROL
 kanʔe-ni-eʔ
 leave(pfv)-SBJV-1PL.S/SOsg
 ‘Now let’s go along the road we came by.’
- (2) ɔliɡa-do bese miʔa-zodi niuʔ pensijʔ
 T Olga-DAT.SG money give(pfv)-1SG.S.PST indeed pension-NOM.SG.1SG
 nɔʔɔ-buʔɔ-niʔ
 catch(pfv)-CVB.SIM-OBL.SG.1SG
 ‘I gave money to Olga, when I got my pension.’
- (3) tʃike-r ɲɔi-za marɔzim-a-da
 F this-NOM.SG.2SG leg-NOM.PL.3SG freeze(pfv)-NMLZ-OBL.SG.3SG
 piiʔa
 be_afraid(ipfv).3SG.S
 ‘His is afraid of freezing his legs.’

Most of non-finite forms can have their subject expressed by a separate noun phrase (4–6), and all of them allow for an expression of direct and indirect objects (2–3). Besides, most non-finite forms can have an affixal marking of their subjects via possessive suffixes (1–5).

The data show that for all core arguments, except subjects, their morphosyntactic encoding is the same in finite and non-finite clauses (2–3). As for subjects of non-finite clauses, they can be encoded by Nominative (4–5), as in finite clauses, but also by Oblique (6), i.e. by the second core case in Enets (unlike all other Samoyedic languages, Enets has only two core cases, Nominative and Oblique, and not three, Nominative, Genitive, and Accusative, see Khanina & Shluinsky 2013). Moreover, the choice of the case for the subject has a frequency correlation with the possessive marking on the non-finite verb. If the subject is marked by Nominative, the non-finite verb form often has a possessive suffix co-referent to it (4–5), but if the subject is marked by Oblique, the non-finite verb form almost never has any possessive suffix (6).

- (4) aa modʃiniʔ be-a-ku-jʔ ɲa-ʔ
 F yeah we(du) keep_vigil(ipfv)-NMLZ-DIM-NOM.SG.1DU exist(ipfv)-CONN
 ni-uʔ aa
 NEG-3SG.S.CONT yeah
 ‘Yeah, this was our duty, yeah.’

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(5) budʲiʔ kɔdʲi-za-xa-dʲiʔ dʲɔʒu-bi
 F they(du) sleep(ipfv)-PTCP.SIM-DAT-OBL.SG.3DU go(ipfv).MULT-PRF.3SG.S
 ‘It came while they were asleep.’

(6) nʲitoda eesaa pɔa-zaʃ ese-da dʲigum-a-xaz
 T (s)he nine year-NOM.SG.3SG.PST father-OBL.SG.3SG disappear(pfv)-NMLZ-ABL
 ‘He was nine years old, when his father died’

At the first glance, this observation is surprising: indeed, a Nominative subject is expected to be associated with structures that are rather finite (and so bear less non-verbal morphology), and an Oblique subject with more nominalized structures (and so bear more nominal morphology). However, we suggest that a clue to this puzzle can be found in Enets possessive noun phrases.

There are two types of plain possessive constructions in Enets: in one of them the possessor is marked by Oblique and the possessee bears no possessive suffix (7), in the other one the possessor is marked by Nominative and the possessee has a possessive suffix (8). Corpus data suggest that these two types of NPs have different syntactic properties and are associated with different functional domains (see Nikolaeva (2014: 221–223) for an account of two types of Tundra Nenets genitive possessive constructions as a structural parallel to the two Enets constructions).

(7) εε-da ubaj koa
 mother-OBL.SG.3SG thimble find(pfv).3SG.S
 ‘She found her mother’s thimble’.

(8) εε-za anʲ kɔdse-da tɔnie-bi
 mother-NOM.SG.3SG and place_for_sleeping-NOM.SG.3SG there_is(ipfv)-PRF.3SG.S
 ‘And her mother had bed curtains, after all’.

In the paper, we will provide an original description of argument encoding in Enets non-finite clauses, of the Enets possessive NPs, and will draw structural and functional links between them.

Khanina, Olesya & Andrey Shluinsky. 2013. Jadernye padezhi sushchestvitelnyx v eneckom jazyke: v poiskax adekvatnogo opisaniya [Core cases of nouns in Enets: in search of an adequate description] // *Lingvisticheskij bespredel — 2. Sbornik nauchnyx trudov k jubileju A. I. Kuznecovoj*. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo MGU, 76–94.

Nikolaeva, Irina. 2014. *A Grammar of Tundra Nenets*. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter.