

THE SPREAD OF RUSSIAN IN THE SOVIET NORTH: A STUDY IN SOCIOLINGUISTIC HISTORY

Olesya Khanina

Institute of Linguistics, RAS & University of Helsinki

RSF

Russian
Science
Foundation



OVERVIEW

1. The problem
2. A case-study: the area and the languages
3. Methodology & data
4. Results: a summary
5. Results: an example (Forest Enets, Tundra Enets)
6. Conclusion

I. THE PROBLEM (I)

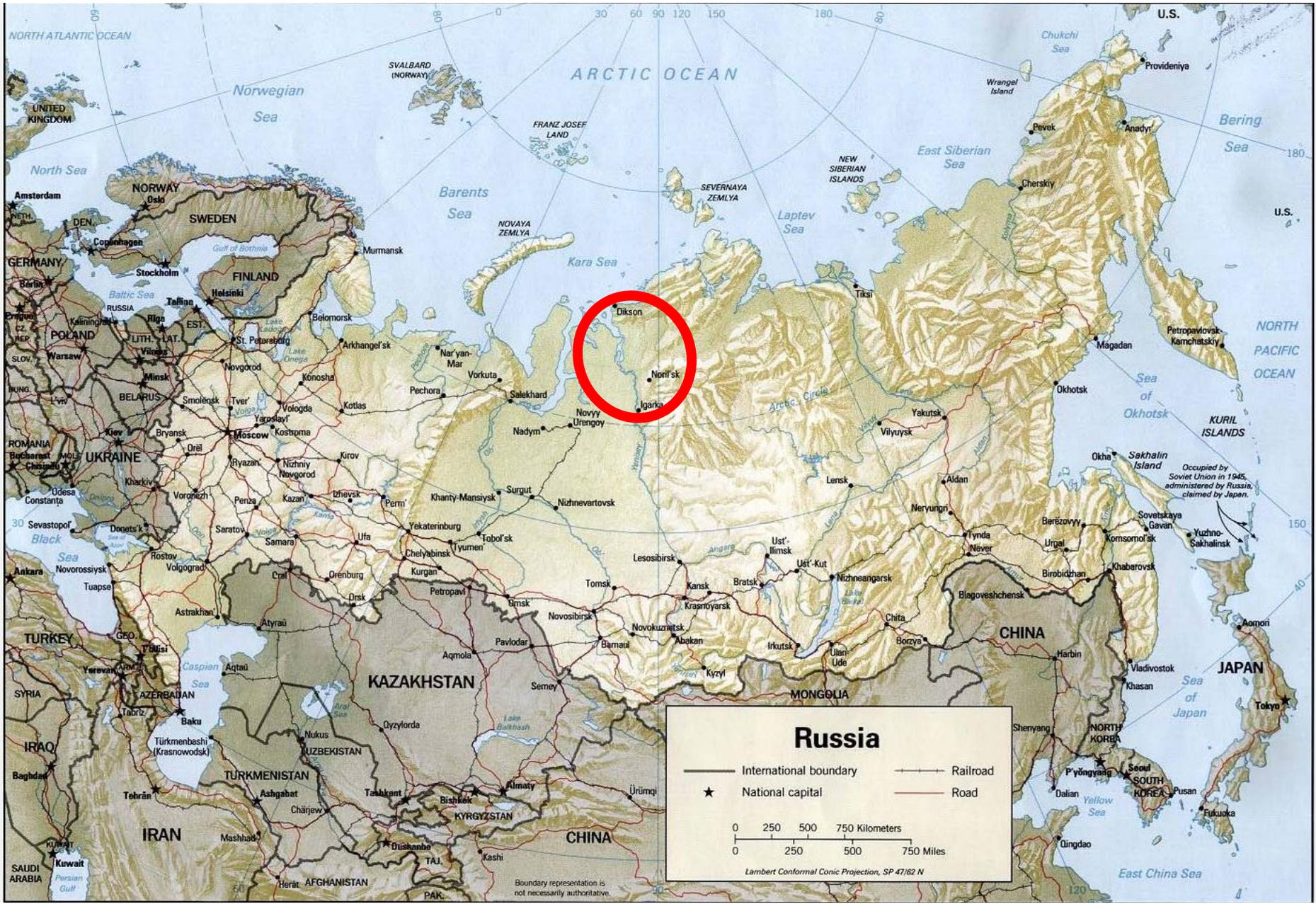
- The North of Siberia used to be inhabited exclusively by speakers of Uralic, Altaic, Yeniseian, Chukotko-Kamchatkan, and Yukaghir languages.
- In the 1920s, only very few indigenous individuals spoke Russian; receptive or active bilingualism in neighboring languages was the norm.
(Wurm et al. 1996, Историко-этнографический атлас 1961, any field report)
- Today, all languages of the North of Siberia are endangered due to the massive shift to Russian
- **How did this change happen?**

I. THE PROBLEM (2)

- **How did this change happen?**
- **From the multilingualism and no Russian in the 1920s to the omnipresent Russian and language shift in the 1970s/1980s?**
- Where, when, and from whom did native speakers of indigenous languages acquire Russian?
- Where, when, and with whom did they use Russian?
- How did these patterns change with time (from the 1920s – until the 1970s)?

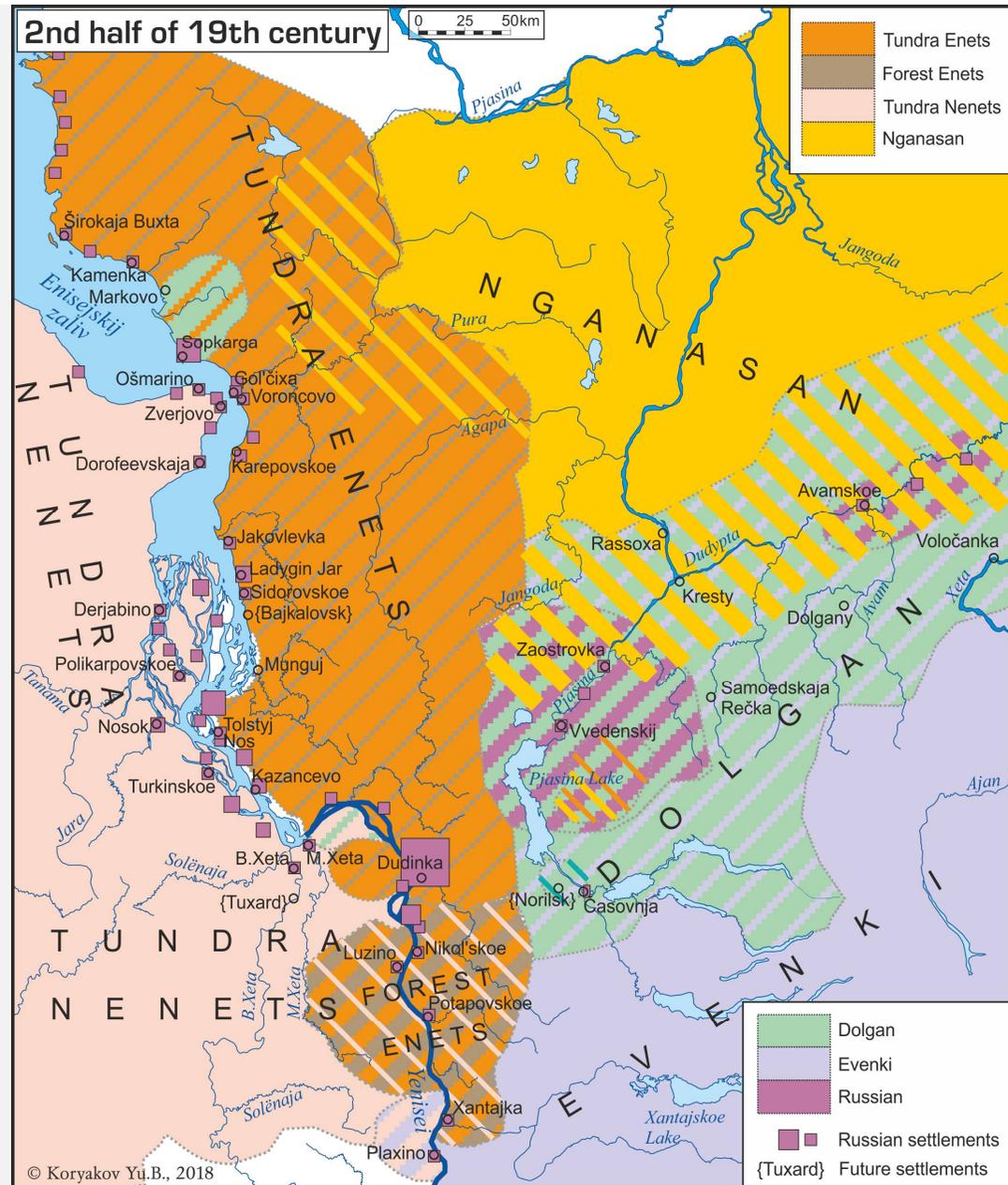
2. A CASE-STUDY: THE AREA AND THE LANGUAGES

- The Lower Yenisei area: the North of Central Siberia



2ND HALF OF THE 19TH – BEG. OF THE 20TH

(KHANINA & KORYAKOV 2019)



2. A CASE-STUDY: THE AREA AND THE LANGUAGES

- The Lower Yenisei area: the North of Central Siberia
 - *Tundra Nenets (Northern Samoyedic)*,
 - *Forest Enets (Northern Samoyedic)*,
 - *Tundra Enets (Northern Samoyedic)*,
 - *Nganasan (Northern Samoyedic)*,
 - Dolgan (Turkic),
 - Evenki (Tungusic).
- From the 19th century on, Russian has also been present in the area: villages

3. METHODOLOGY & DATA

- Semi-structured sociolinguistic interviews conducted in 2017 with elder representatives of the corresponding ethnic groups (myself + Maria Amelina)
 - centered around sociolinguistic past of the elder relatives of the respondents (parents, grandparents, elder siblings, etc.) and their own childhood years,
cf. a similar methodology for Daghestan in Dobrushina (2013)
 - all mentions of Russian or the Russians organized into a timescale
 - dates of birth of the respondents and their relatives,
 - years of schooling of the respondents and their relatives
 - most respondents could also recall how and when their parents had learnt Russian.
- + Published ethnographic accounts

4. RESULTS: A SUMMARY

- The Enets and the Nganasan cases are shown to be very similar, with just a dozen of years difference: an abrupt dividing line between
 - the generation born before the mid-1930s (FE, TE) / mid-1940s (Ng): never acquired Russian fully and predominantly used their native languages in all domains,
 - the generation born after the mid-1930s (FE, TE) / mid-1940s (Ng): spoke Russian as their other native language, and mainly used their mother tongue in communication with older generation or in the presence, but not anywhere else (this tendency strengthened with time).
- The Tundra Nenets case is different
 - the acquisition of Russian did not stop the use of the native language for most of this community;
 - unlike the Enets and the Nganasans, the Tundra Nenets have managed to keep reindeer herding and the nomadic lifestyle until nowadays.

RESULTS: AN EXAMPLE (I)

- Forest Enets, Tundra Enets
- Resulting timescale:
 - Before the end of the 1930s: very limited contacts with Russian
 - The 1940s – 1950s: the russification campaign
 - The 1960s: the transition period
 - The 1970s: the victory of Russian

RESULTS: AN EXAMPLE (2)

Time period	How many Enets can speak RUSSIAN ?	How many Enets can speak ENETS ?	What is the FIRST language of most Enets?	WHO acquires Russian?	FROM WHOM is Russian acquired?
1910s – 1920s	Very few	All	Enets	Individual Enets serving as translators, dog-team drivers, reindeer-team drivers, guides, helpers in seasonal fishery (e.g sturgeon), or yardmen	Local Russian merchants speaking dialectal Russian

Time period	How many Enets can speak RUSSIAN?	How many Enets can speak ENETS?	What is the FIRST language of most Enets?	WHO acquires Russian?	FROM WHOM is Russian acquired?
End of 1940s – end of 1950s	Some, the number is quickly increasing	All	Enets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - younger adult Enets (born after 1910) in School of kolxoz workers or at 'likbez' courses; - school children (born after 1935) in schools; - elder Enets (born before 1915) in families 	Teachers from mainland Russia and some adult Enets

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1960s	Many	Most	Transition: Enets -> Russian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - preschool children (born after 1960) in families; - elementary school children (born before 1960) in schools 	Elder Enets siblings; teachers from mainland Russia; Enets teachers speaking Russian; some adult Enets

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1970s	Most	Many	Russian	preschool children in families	Enets parents and elder siblings

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2000s	All	Very few	Russian	preschool children in families	Enets parents and elder siblings, Russian speaking children of other ethnic origin, Russian TV

CONCLUSION

- Change of the paradigm: sociolinguistic details ARE interesting.
- Only 1 or 2 decades – in the 1960s, possibly also in the 1970s – both Enets and Russian were in active use **by the same individuals**.
- Starting from the end of the 1970s, Enets was used mainly with the elders and sometimes in reindeer brigades, with a shift to Russian taken place in all other domains.
- E.g. a linguistic consequence: the brevity of the intensive interaction of the two linguistic systems resulted in little Russian structural influence on Enets, in contrast to much more common code-switching and nonce borrowings in the modern Enets speech