

MULTILINGUALISM AT THE LOWER YENISEI RIVER (SIBERIA)

OLESYA KHANINA

INSTITUTE OF LINGUISTICS RAS & FINNO-UGRIAN SOCIETY & UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI



OUTLINE

1. Local languages
2. Mapping local social categories and languages to each other: approach and data
3. Ethnic categories: a bottom-up approach
4. Lack of one-to-one correspondence between languages and any social groups
5. Cross-linguistic parallels

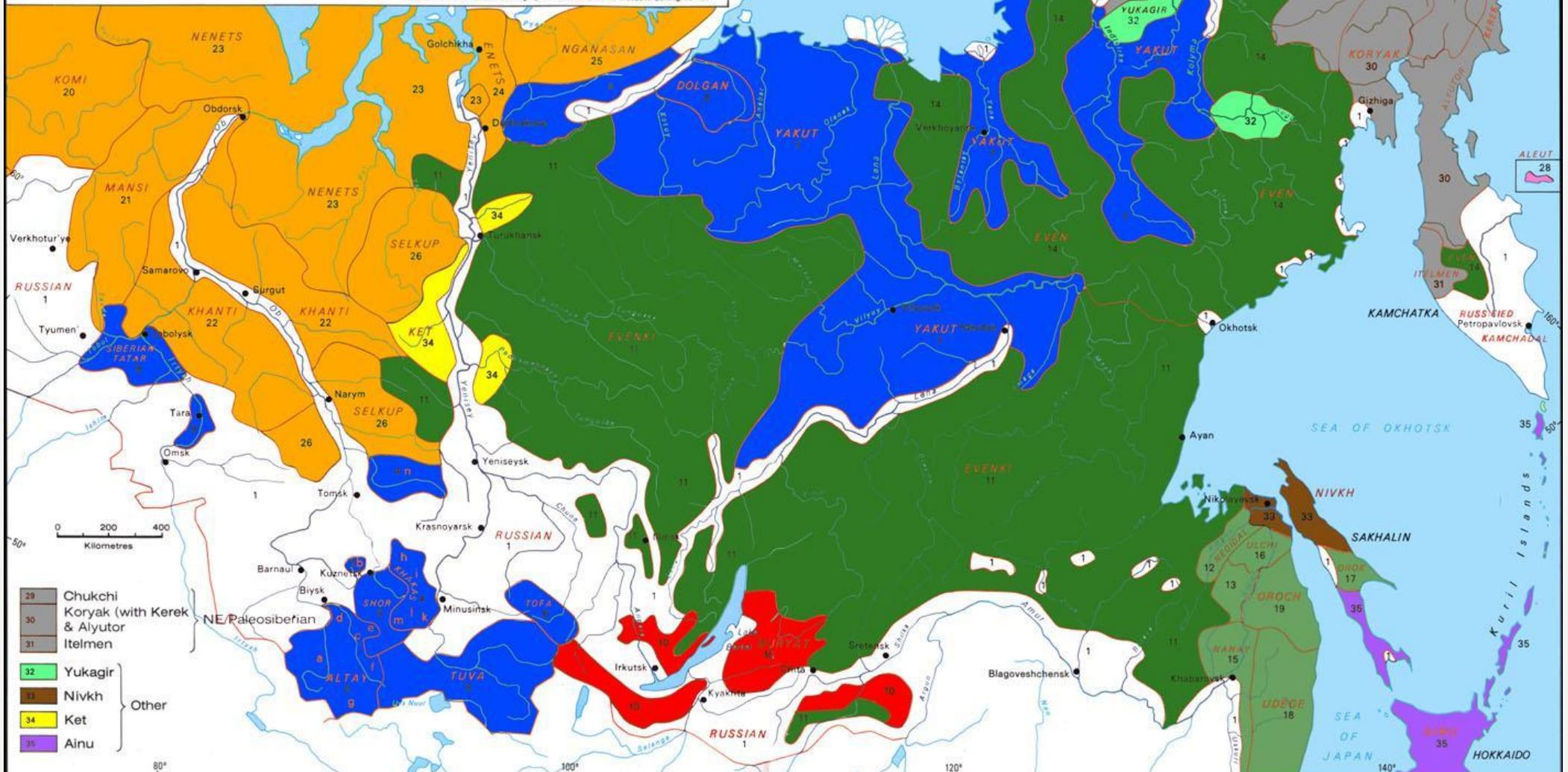
Language ideologies as a theoretical framework for the present study (e.g. Kroskrity, 2000; Rumsey, 1990; Silverstein, 1979; Woolard, 1998).

Khanina, Olesya. 2021. Languages and ideologies at Lower Yenisei (Siberia): reconstructing past multilingualism, *International Journal of Bilingualism* (a special issue *Typology of Small-Scale Multilingualism*, edited by Nina Dobrushina, Olesya Khanina, and Brigitte Pakendorf).

Distribution of ethnic groups and languages in Siberia at the beginning of the 20th Century

1	Russian and Russified Kamchadal	a	Altay	m	Khakas	16	Ulchi	Tungus-Manchu
b	Altay Kizhi	n	Teleut	17	Beltir	17	Orok	
c	Tuba		Kumandin	18	Chulym	18	Udege	Fenno-Ugric
d	Chelkan		Teles	19	Tuva	19	Oroch	
e	Telenget		Shor	20	Yakut	20	Komi → Finnic	Ugric
f	Shor		Khakas	21	Khanty	21	Mansi	
g	Khakas		Kyzyl	22	Siberian Tatar	22	Khanty	Samoyedic
h	Kyzyl		Kachin	23	Buryat	23	Nenets	
i	Koibal		Koibal	24	Mongol	24	Enets	Eskimo-Aleut
k	Sagay		Sagay	25		Nganasan	25	
l				26	Evenki	26	Selkup	
				12	Negidal	12		
				13	Samagir	13		
				14	Even	14		
				15	Nanay	15		

Based on the Historical Ethnographic Atlas of Siberia, Moscow-Leningrad 1961

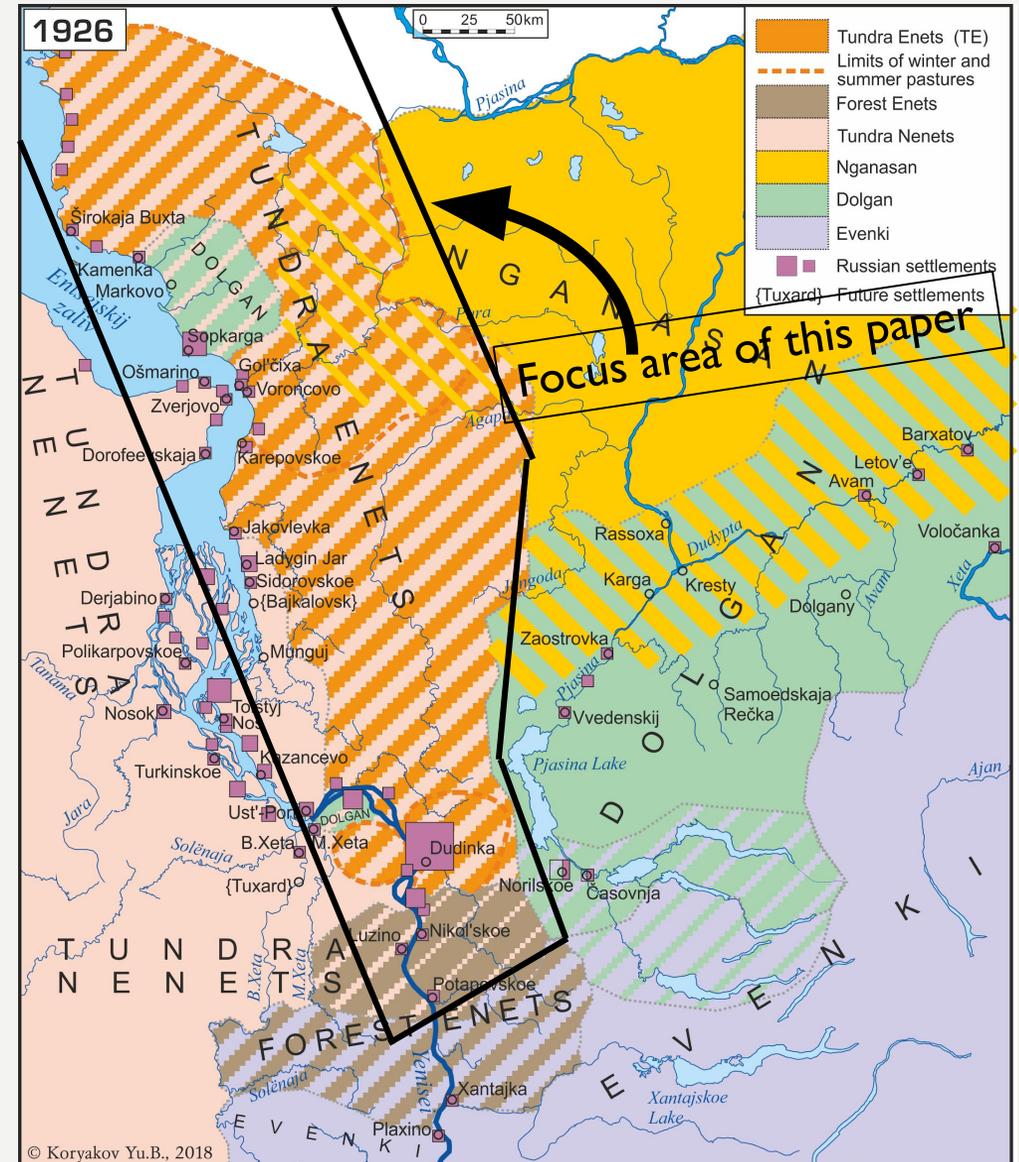


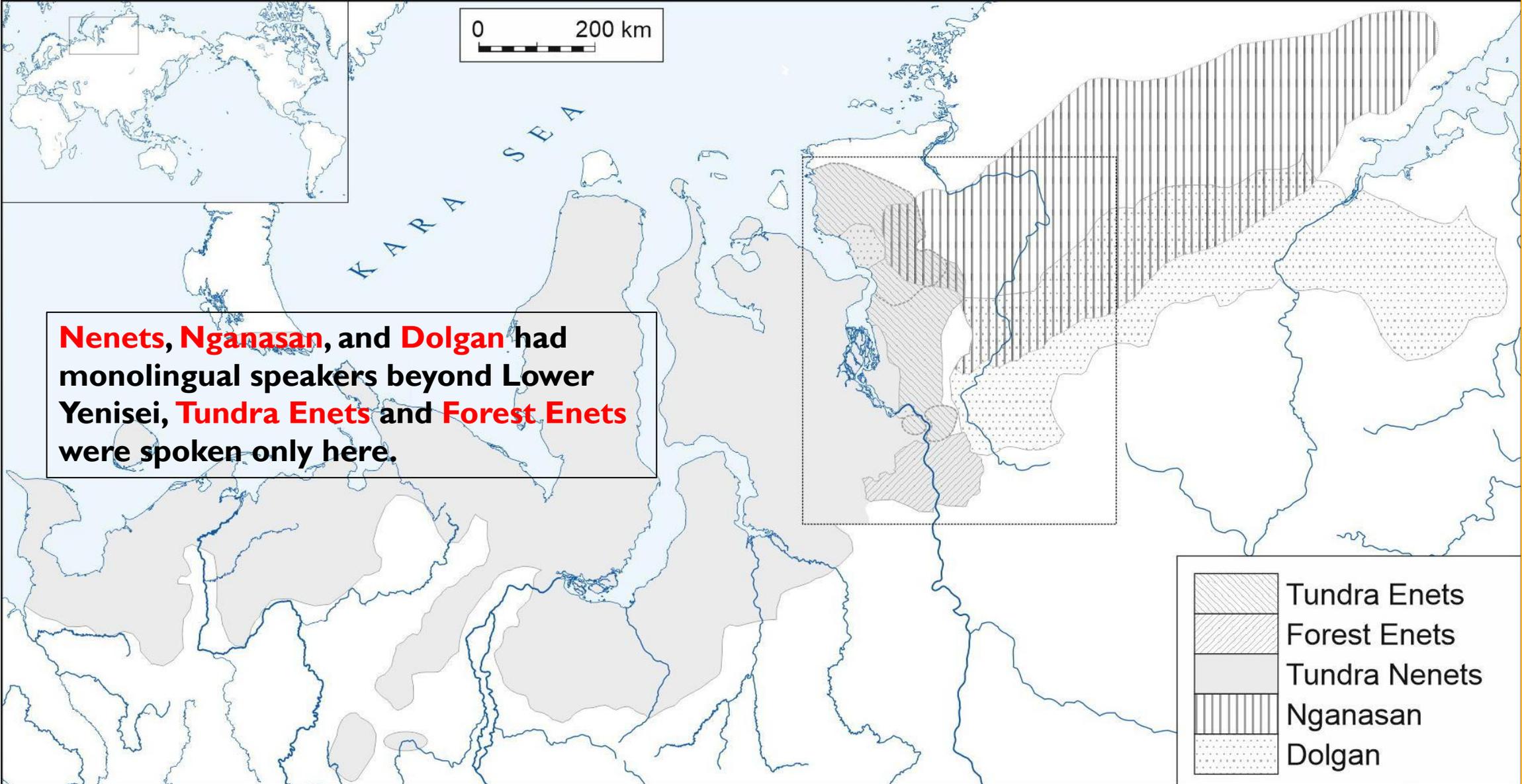
29	Chukchi
30	Koryak (with Kerek & Alyutor)
31	Itelmen
32	Yukagir
33	Nivkh
34	Ket
35	Ainu

Other

1. LOCAL LANGUAGES

- **Nenets, Forest Enets, Tundra Enets, Nganasan:** Northern Samoyedic (< Uralic)
 - **Forest Enets** is very similar to **Tundra Enets**
- **Dolgan:** Turkic
- Very low population density: ca. 200 * 500 km
 - ~ 2 000 (semi-)nomadic indigenous people,
 - ~ 500 Russian colonizers in villages along Yenisei.







2. A RETROSPECTIVE STUDY

- The period in focus: 1900-1930s, just before the sovietization of this part of Russia marked by
 - externally driven changes in subsistence modes: collective farms, nationalizations of reindeer, etc.,
 - imprisonment of shamans and rich(=efficient) reindeer herders,
 - fleeing of indigenous locals to less accessible areas (=away from the Yenisei river),
 - obligatory school education in Russian, in boarding schools,
 - Russian as lingua franca,
 - a rapid language shift to Russian: not a single children speaking an indigenous language today

3. RESEARCH QUESTION

How were these languages mapped to social groups?

- E.g. one ethnic group – one language, OR
- E.g. one ethnic group, several clans – several languages, OR
- E.g. one geographically-defined social group - one language, etc.

Was there any relationship between this mapping and patterns of multilingualism?

4. DATA

- a) the 1926 census data,
- b) ethnographic field reports from 1920s-1960s,
- c) narratives collected in the 1940s (also Khanina & Meyerhoff 2018),
- d) 35 retrospective sociolinguistic interviews from 2017 (also Khanina 2019),
- e) ethnonyms of local languages (based on corpora of respective languages).

(With a background of my language documentation fieldtrips 2005-2017.)

(a)-(b) provide a background for the interpretation of (socio)linguistic data (c)-(e).

An ethnographic approach is taken, which interprets sociolinguistic data in view of emic categorizations.

- How to access a sociolinguistic setting in the past?
 - Dobrushina (2013): retrospective interviews
 - Dobrushina & Moroz (2021), Pupynina & Aralova (2021): census data.

5. LOCAL SOCIAL CATEGORIES

- Russians set apart, all local people could be categorized by their **clans** (exogamous; ca. 40) and **patterns of material culture** (Dolgan vs. NSamoyedic; Nenets & Forest Enets vs. Nganasan & Tundra Enets)
 - Unambiguous for each individual
- There were also categories of a higher order: so-called **ethnic groups**, but they were not as unambiguous and mutually exclusive as the first two.

6. 'ETHNIC' GROUPS

- Which ethnic groups live in the area?
- 6 named groups are found in most local lects (exonyms and endonyms)

BUT

- some local languages merge some of these six groups in their lexicons,
- some languages lack original endonyms
- some words have changed their meaning in the course of just several decades.

Name of a representative of the group	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	Merges are shown in bold		
					(5)	(6)	
in Nenets	jurak°	(pia) waj	manto	tawis	tungos	lusa	
in Nganasan	d'üriakə	bai	səmaʔtu	ńaa	aśa	l'üəʔsa	
in Tundra Enets	diurako	(pe) baj	somatu, mandu 1930: ɔnej enetʃeʔ	tau, 1930: ɔnej enetʃeʔ	ɔʃa	losa	
	ɔnej enetʃeʔ						
in Forest Enets	diurako	ɔnej entʃeʔ 1930: pebaj	madu (also tau)	tau (also madu)	ɔʃa	losa, rosa	
	ɔnej entʃeʔ						
in Dolgan	d'urak, n'en'ec	?	ha:maj		dalga:n, dulga:n, haka	n'u:čča, nu:čča	
		en'ec		nganasan, nganasan'in			
in local Russian of the 1930s	jurak		xantajskij samod'in, xantajskij, somatu	avamskij samod'in, tau, avamskij tau, avamskij	dolgan	russk'ij, krest'janin	
	jurak	karasinskij samod'in, karasinskij (also baj, muggad'i, chor...)	samod'in				
in modern local Russian	n'en'ec, tuxardskij	potapovskij, enec	potapovskij voroncovskij, voroncovskij en'ec, somatu	nganasan(in), avamskij	dolgan('in)	russk'ij	
		en'ec					
in academic English	a Nenets	a Forest Enets	a Tundra Enets	a Nganasan	a Dolgan	a local Russian of the 1930s	

6. 'ETHNIC' GROUPS

- some local languages merge some of these six groups in their lexicons,
 - Tundra Enets & Nganasan, Forest Enets & Nenets, Forest Enets & Tundra Enets, Tundra Enets & Nganasan & Forest Enets, Tundra Enets & Nganasan & Forest Enets & Nenets
- some languages lack original endonyms
 - Tundra Enets: borrowed from Nganasan (earlier) and Nenets (later)
 - Forest Enets, Dolgan: no endonyms, self reference by clan names only, endonyms were invented by Soviet ethnographers and linguists in the 1930s
- some words have changed their meaning in the course of just several decades.

7. SOCIAL GROUPS AND LANGUAGES

- Multidirectional **language shifts** by clans or their fractions over the past centuries:
 - clans switched from one language to another,
 - family (=blood) connections between clans currently speaking different languages.
- Mismatches 'named ethnic groups' <-> 'languages' attested in the 1926 census
 - 77% of those who named themselves Tundra Enets said their language was TE, the others chose Nenets
 - 53% of those who named themselves Forest Enets said their language was FE, the others chose TE
 - 84% of those who named themselves Nenets said their language was Nenets, the others chose FE or TE
 - 50% of those who said they spoke TE, declared themselves as belonging to a different 'ethnic' group: FE, Nenets
- Language shifts between clans did not necessarily lead to shifts in emic social categorizations ('outsiders that acquired our language'), i.e. a shared language did not automatically mean a shared social identity.
- Holders of traditional knowledge in a particular language could function as such regardless their membership in a different 'ethnic' group (academic fieldtrips to the area).

7. SOCIAL GROUPS AND LANGUAGES

Summing up, at Lower Yenisei we see

- no uniformity in categorization by ‘ethnic groups’,
- no direct correlations between languages and any social category (neither clans, nor ‘ethnic’ groups)
- numerous diachronic changes in social categories and languages spoken by their members.

Anderson (2000), an ethnographer’s view: the complexity and flexibility of ethnic categories at the Lower Yenisei river is not a chaotic mess, but a reflection of a profoundly distinct social world.

⇒ Multilingualism was a logical counterpart of this social order on the linguistic side.

8. THE CROSS-LINGUISTIC PARALLELS

- No one-to-one correlations between languages and social categories:
 - De Vries (2012: 15) for West Papua: "languages transcend the boundaries of the clan, and speakers of the same language live on a different clan territory and may be your enemies"
- At LY, linguistic identities did not play a decisive role in social identities:
 - Singer (2018: 107-108) for Australia: "languages are not necessarily the most important aspects of people's identities at Waruwi".
- OR local social identities were of relational nature, when one's position in a concrete web of interpersonal relations was more relevant than belonging to a category.
 - Di Carlo & Good (2004), Di Carlo et al. (2019), Lüpke 2016 for West Africa (Lower Fungom, Casamance): relational identities are much more common than categorical, when individuals see themselves as members of a class with particular categorical attributes
- Speech communities where linguistic repertoires are more reliable "loci of authenticity" than single languages
 - Ball (2011) for Upper Xingu in Amazonia, Morozova & Rusakov (2021) for a Balkan area, Childs et al. (2014) for Sub-Saharan Africa, Kroskrity (2018) for California

ASPECTS OF MULTILINGUALISM 1

Language use within families and child language acquisition

- Ca. 50% of all marriages in the area were mixed, i.e. multiethnic (the 1926 census).
- In multiethnic families, one language was usually chosen for communication with children, usually the one that was heard the most often in the whereabouts of the family
 - occasionally, the language of the husband could be chosen even if in the minority
 - the linguistic majority of the focus area was Enets, with TE in the north and FE in the south, and so this contributed to the maintenance of TE and TE despite numerous speakers of other languages around.
- It was rare for each parent to practice speaking different languages to the children.
- When communicating between themselves, parents used the same language as chosen for communication with children, or they spoke each their own language (=receptive bilingualism).
 - This often vanished with time as the spouse with the minority language acquired the other language.
- Children usually acquired their second and third languages when playing with their peers and while listening to the adults conversing with visitors to their tents.

ASPECTS OF MULTILINGUALISM 2

Language use beyond the family

- Everyone could at least understand all languages regularly used around them, and often also speak them.
 - Remember the relatedness of most local languages!
- Adults whose native language was not practiced in the family used every opportunity to speak it, either with adults from the same 'ethnic' group or with those having a good command of it.
 - Remember the spring visits!
- It was also common to use the language of one's interlocutor: a kind of politeness often conditioned by practical needs (if one needs something from his/her interlocutor).
- Little emblematic value: no language was seen as better than the others, and one's repertoires did not influence one's social weight.
- It was the multilingualism per se that was appreciated in contrast to any single local language.
 - The most respected adults were usually multilingual, just because rich life experience inevitably presupposed confronting many people and thus acquiring many languages.

CONCLUSION

- At LY, linguistic indexing of identity relied more on local social networks than on ancestry: choosing the language to use with their children, parents valued neighborhood above kinship.
 - (François, 2012: 91) for Vanuatu: in marriages across islands the dominant language of the household is usually the language of the village where the couple has chosen to live.
 - NB: a common reason for language shifts worldwide, but at LY all languages were shifted from and shifted to, so languages were equal in this respect.

P.S.

My way through this study:

- data collected in the field
 - with very limited sociolinguistic background, I am a descriptive linguist and a typologist by training!
- first generalizations: "languages are not important in the local social world" - how could this be??
- review of the literature devoted to ideologies shared by small-scale multilingual societies (as a part of Pakendorf, Dobrushina & Khanina 2021)
- noticing the same ideological patterns in my data.

REFERENCES

- Anderson, D. (2000). *Identity and ecology in arctic Siberia*. OUP.
- Ball (2011). Pragmatic multilingualism at the Upper Xingu speech community // Franchetto, (ed.). *Alto Xingu: uma sociedade multilíngue*. Rio de Janeiro, 87-112.
- Childs, Good & Mitchell (2014). Beyond the Ancestral Code, *Lang. Document. & Conserv.* 8, 168-191.
- de Vries (2012). Speaking of clans, *Int'l. J. Soc. Lang.* 214, 5 – 26.
- Dobrushina, N. (2013). How to study multilingualism of the past: Investigating traditional contact situations in Daghestan. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 17 (3), 376-393.
- Evans. 2017. Did language evolve in multilingual settings? *Biology & Philosophy*, 32(6), 905–933.
- François (2012). The dynamics of linguistic diversity, *Int'l. J. Soc. Lang.* 214, 85–110.
- Khanina, O. (2019). Dinamika mnogojazyčija v nizov'jax Eniseja: opyt sociolingvističeskogo opisanija situacii v prošlom. *Tomsk Journal of Linguistics and Anthropology*, 23, 9-28.
- Khanina, O., & Meyerhoff M. (2018). A case-study in historical sociolinguistics beyond Europe: reconstructing patterns of multilingualism of a language community in Siberia. *Journal of Historical Sociolinguistics*, 4(2), 221–251.
- Kroskirty (2018). On recognizing persistence in the Indigenous language ideologies of multilingualism in two Native American Communities. *Lang. & Comm.* 62, 133–144.

REFERENCES

- Kroskrity, P. (2000). Language ideologies in the expression and representation of Arizona Tewa identity. In P. Kroskrity, (Ed.), *Regimes of language: Ideologies, politics, and identities* (pp. 329-359). School of American Research Press.
- Merlan (1981). Land, language and social identity in Aboriginal Australia. *Mankind Quarterly* 13(2), 133–148.
- Morozova, M. & Rusakov, A. (2021). Societal multilingualism à la balkanique: the Montenegrin Velja Gorana and beyond. *International Journal of Bilingualism* (Typology of Small-Scale Multilingualism, edited by N. Dobrushina, O. Khanina, B. Pakendorf).
- Pakendorf, B., Dobrushina, N., & Khanina, O. (2021). A typology of small-scale multilingualism. *International Journal of Bilingualism* (Typology of Small-Scale Multilingualism, edited by N. Dobrushina, O. Khanina, B. Pakendorf).
- Pupynina, M. & Aralova, N. (2021). Lower Kolyma multilingualism: Historical setting and sociolinguistic trends. *International Journal of Bilingualism* (Typology of Small-Scale Multilingualism, edited by N. Dobrushina, O. Khanina, B. Pakendorf).
- Rumsey, A. (1990). Wording, meaning, and linguistic ideology. *American Anthropologist*, 92(2), 346–361.
- Silverstein, M. (1979). Language structure and linguistic ideology. In P. Clyne, W. Hanks, & C. Hofbauer (Eds.), *The elements: A parasection on linguistic units and levels* (pp. 193–247). Chicago Linguistic Society.
- Singer (2018). A small speech community with many small languages, *Lang. & Comm.* 62, 102–118.
- Woolard, K. (1998). Introduction: Language Ideology as a Field of Inquiry. In B. Schieffelin, K. Woolard, & P. Kroskrity (Eds.), *Language Ideologies. Practice and Theory* (pp. 1–47). Oxford University Press.

INTRODUCTION 1

- multilingual Lower Yenisei area in Siberia
- a comprehensive study of the sociolinguistic landscape
- illuminating parallels between indigenous communities in the Northern Siberia and
 - Australia (Merlan 1981, Singer 2018),
 - West Papua (de Vries 2012),
 - Vanuatu (Francois 2012),
 - Amazon (Aikhenvald 2003, Ball 2011),
 - Arizona (Kroskrity 2018),
 - Africa (Childs et al. 2014).

INTRODUCTION 2

Recurrent patterns are attested in these indigenous multilingual communities:

- **absence of hierarchical and one-to-one relationships** between social units, types of materials culture, and languages,
- **shared cultural knowledge** and principles of interactions irrespective of particular codes,
- **relational identities** and ideologies **deemphasizing linguistic** contributions to these identities.

-> **basic mechanisms of (a version of) the precolonial sociolinguistic past?**

LOWER YENISEI: AREA & LANGUAGES

- All indigenous people practiced the same type of activities, so no barter exchange or trade.
 - However, domestic reindeer of bigger herds were exchanged from time to time to ensure the better health of reindeer population: not with families in direct neighborhood, but with the more distant ones.
- Every spring (March-April): an important custom of paying and hosting visits
 - in-married spouses would visit their parents and the rest of the family,
 - moments of the most social interaction.
- People rarely met complete strangers: anyone met could be connected to someone already known.
- The physical distance between individual families was only a weak correlate of the social distance between them, and networks were supported rather by marriages and regular visits than by direct geographic proximity.
- Communities of this Arctic area were much looser than elsewhere.