

Language-inherent variability or contact-induced change?

The clitic *že* 'after all' in Russian speech of Nanai and Ulcha speakers

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Introduction



The discourse enclitic *že* in Russian speech of Nanai and Ulcha speakers

⇒ The discourse enclitic *že* ‘I mean’, ‘after all’, ‘the fact is’...

(1) *Oni razvodilis'=že*

3PL divorce.PST.PL.REFL=**DISC**

‘The thing is they were divorcing’ (ulc_aap)

Compared to monolinguals’ Russian, In Russian speech of Nanai and Ulcha bilinguals (Tungusic), this clitic is remarkable for:

- high frequency
- non-standard linear position

? Induced by contact with Tungusic?

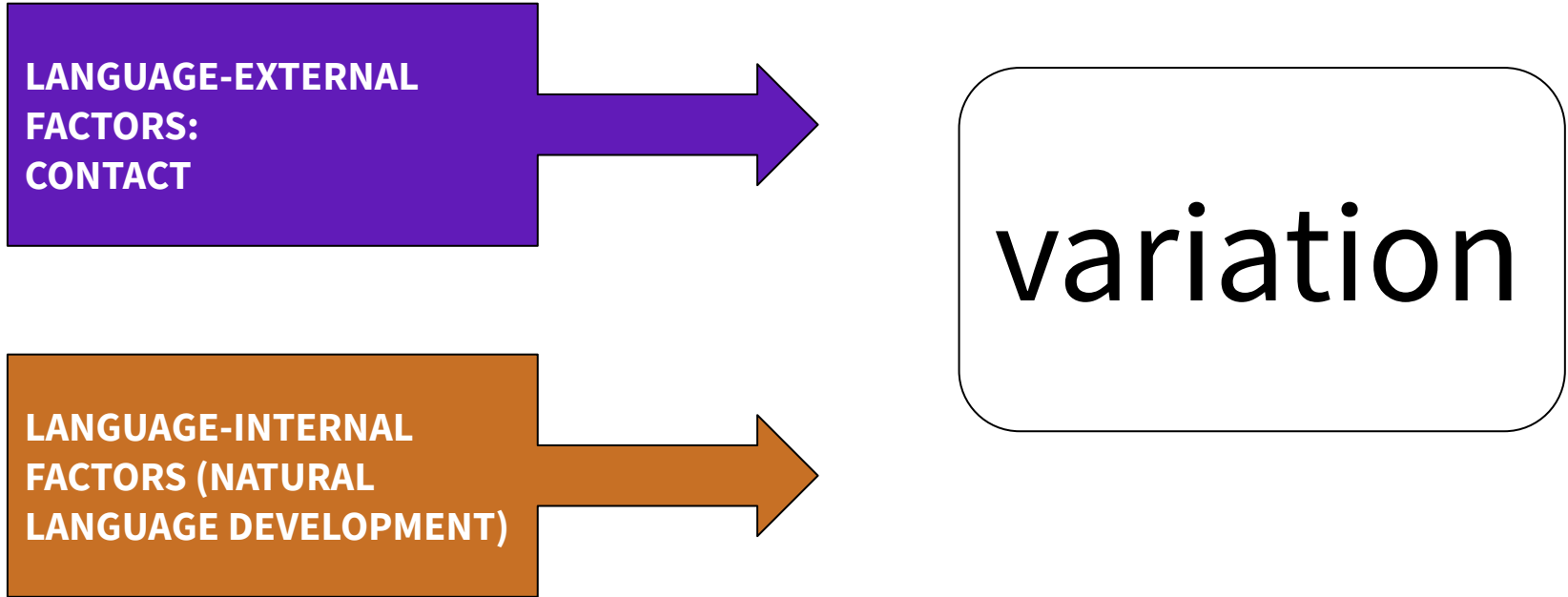
A wider perspective

There are several claims on **contact-induced grammatical variation and change** that can be tested on these data:

- It is **difficult to differentiate** between contact-induced and language-internal processes
- What looks like a pattern-borrowing in grammar of a contact-influenced variety might be in fact motivated by a **weaker pressure of prescriptive norms**
- Language contact often does not lead to the emergence of a new grammatical feature, but **strengthens already-existing tendencies**

Thomason 2009; Poplack & Levey 2010 among others

A wider perspective



Questions

? Does the clitic *že* copy some Tungusic pattern in Russian speech of the Nanais and Ulchas? \Leftrightarrow CONTACT

OR

? Are its features attested in spontaneous oral speech of Tungusic bilinguals typical of spoken Russian as a whole? \Leftrightarrow NATURAL LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

What the talk is about

A corpus-based analysis of *že* in Nanai Russian, Ulcha Russian, and monolinguals' spoken Russian shows that:

- the behavior of *že* in Tungusic Russian goes in line with tendencies attested in monolinguals' spoken Russian

⇒ FOR the NATURAL LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT HYPOTHESIS

- at the same time, *že* behaves in slightly different ways in Nanai Russian and in Ulcha Russian
- this reflects the difference between its Nanai and Ulcha counterparts

towards TYPOLOGY: a contact motivation is difficult to detect, but it becomes possible when looking at more than one language variety

⇒ FOR the CONTACT HYPOTHESIS

Preliminary remarks



Nanai and Ulcha in contact with Russian

→ Southern Tungusic (the Amur region < Khabarovsk Krai < Russia)

→ Endangered:

- all speakers are of older generations
- all speakers also use Russian

NANAI:

- 1347 speakers, 11 % of the ethnic group (Census 2010)

Gerasimova (2002); Kalinina & Oskolskaya (2016)

ULCHA:

- 154 speakers, 6 % of the ethnic group (Census 2010)

Gerasimova (2002); Sumbatova & Gusev (2016)

→ Russian speech of the Nanais and Ulchas (further: Tungusic Russian, Nanai Russian, Ulcha Russian)

- some peculiarities presumably motivated by contact
- great variation
- a continuum from a “near-pidgin” (the oldest speakers) to “near-standard” monolinguals’ Russian

Corpus data

→ Five collections of oral spontaneous texts comparable in types and genres

Descriptive statistics: 2-tailed exact Fisher's test

language variety	sample	tokens
monolinguals' Russian	the collection "Memories of Muscovites about the past" (Kitajgorodskaja & Rozanova 1999) included in the Russian National Corpus (https://ruscorpora.ru/)	53, 886
Nanai Russian	our field collection included in http://web-corpora.net/ruscontact/corpus.html	81, 071
Ulcha Russian	ml	64, 125
Nanai		47, 433
Ulcha	our field collection	55, 384

Že in monolinguals' Russian



Že in monolinguals' Russian

FORM: že~ž

FUNCTION:

- a wide range of uses with **sentential scope** (cf., e.g., Paducheva 1987)
disclaimer: only such uses will be taken into account
- including “**argumentative**” uses: ‘after all’, ‘I mean’, ‘the fact is’

(1) Vy **ž** na Ordynke žili, hotja blizko
2PL **DISC** on Ordynka live.PST.PL although nearby
‘Well, you **lived** on Ordynka Street, although nearby.’ (RNC, Memories)

(2) A u nas ne bylo togda kinoteatrov
and near 1PL.GEN NEG be.PST.N then cinema.GEN.PL
Nu razrušeno **že** vsjo eto
well destroyed.SHORT.N **DISC** all.N this.N
‘But we had no cinemas that time. Well, the fact is everything **was destroyed.**’ (RNC, Memories)

Že in monolinguals' Russian

POSITION: *(for sentential uses!)*

- enclitic
- usually occupies **the second (Wackernagel's) position** in the clause:

(1) Oni=**že** poznakomilis'...
3PL=**DISC** meet.PST.3PL.REFL
'I mean, they **met...**' (RNC, Memories)

In Old Russian, its position was strict (Zalizniak 2008)

In Modern Russian, some variation is attested:

- it is greater in **spoken** texts
- the position is more variable among **argumentative uses** of že (Valova & Slioussar 2017)
- sometimes, a non-standard position is motivated by information structure (Bonnot & Kodzasov 1998)

Counterparts to *že* in Nanai and Ulcha



The enclitic *guəni~guni*: the closest counterpart to *že*

FORM:

- *guəni/goani/guə/goa* (Nanai) ~ *guni/gun* (Ulcha)

FREQUENCY:

- more frequent than *že*, especially in Nanai

FUNCTIONS:

- In Ulcha: similar to those of the argumentative *že*
- In Nanai: a more bleached semantics

POSITION:

- enclitic, postverbal (postpredicative)

The enclitic *guəni~guni*: examples

(1) Nanai

təj soleka=tani ži-či-n'=goa təj mama-na bāroani
that fox.DIM=and come-PST-3SG=**DISC** that old.woman-ASS.PL to
'And the fox **came** to the old man and old woman.' (gld_fna)

(2) Ulcha

žapa-ra twan-di-ni mut-ə-s-i-n,
take-CVB.ANT pull-PRS-3SG be.able-CONN-PRS.NEG-3SG
ti Vas'a ŋučkə=**guni**
that PN small=**DISC**

'He took it, he pulls it, but he can't (move it), this Vasja - after all, he **is little!**'
(ulc_agk)

Corpus data





Non-standard uses of že in Tungusic Russian

→ Preliminary observations:

- more frequent - TO CHECK ON CORPUS DATA
- sometimes, non-standard position - TO CHECK ON CORPUS DATA
- (sometimes, non-standard semantics - MORE DIFFICULT TO CHECK)
- variation: non-standard uses compete with standard ones

Non-standard uses of že in Tungusic Russian

- (1) Pik eto ___ russkoe slovo že
peak COP Russian.N word DISC
“‘Pik’ is a Russian word.’ (gld_pnv) - postverbal
- 

- (2) V sorok četvortom godu ja ___ rybačila že
in forty fourth.M.LOC year.LOC 1SG fish.PST.F DISC
‘In 1944, I fished...’ (ulc_vas) - postverbal
- 

- (3) U nas že často goloda byli že
near 1PL.GEN DISC often hunger.PL be.PST.PL DISC
‘At our place, people often suffered a famine.’ (ulc_aap) - doubling: second & postverbal

Expected outcomes of contact with Tungusic

→ If *že* copies *guəni~guni* in Tungusic Russian:

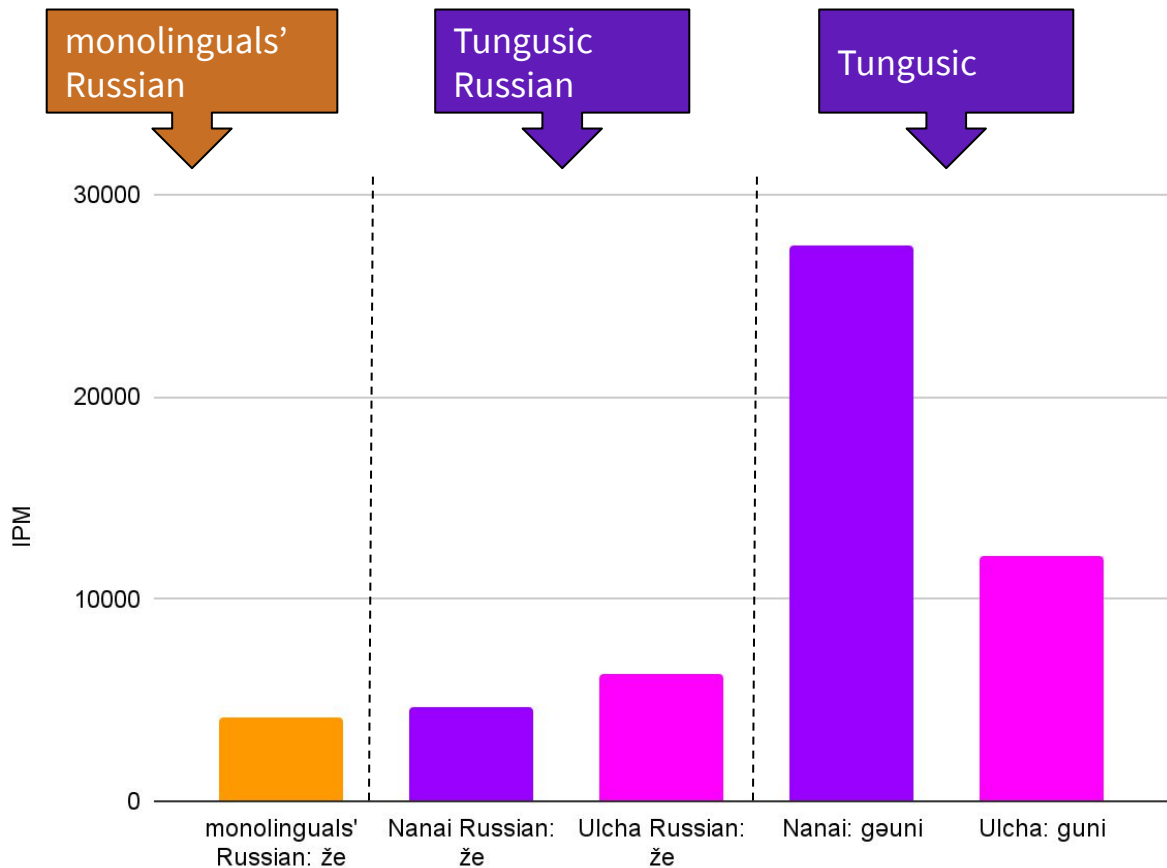
- it is expected to be **more frequent** than in monolinguals' Russian (since *guəni~guni* is more frequent)
- it is expected to be less prone to the second position and more prone to the **postverbal position** (typical of *guəni~guni*)

Frequency (IPM)

→ *ž*e is indeed more frequent in Tungusic Russian than in **monolinguals' Russian**

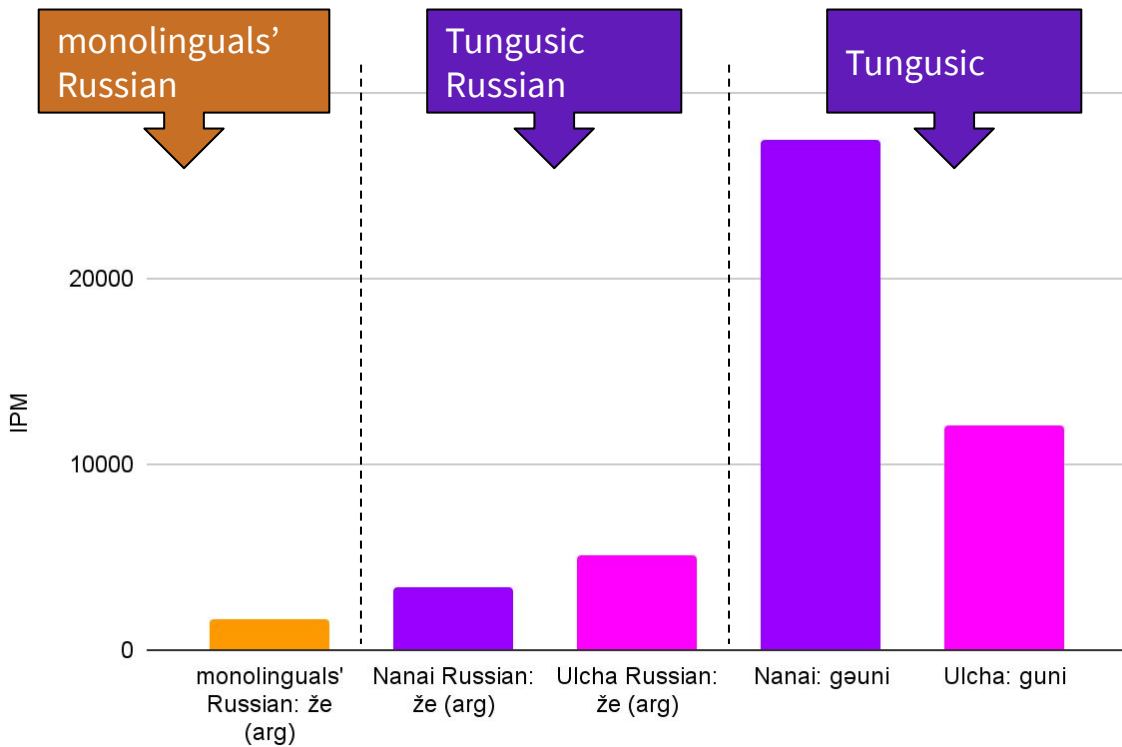
→ However, it is much less frequent than *guəni~guni*

→ In **Ulcha Russian** *ž*e is more frequent than in **Nanai Russian** (although the **Ulcha** *guni* is less frequent than the **Nanai** *guəni*)



Frequency (IPM): argumentative uses of že only

→ For argumentative uses, the effect is stronger

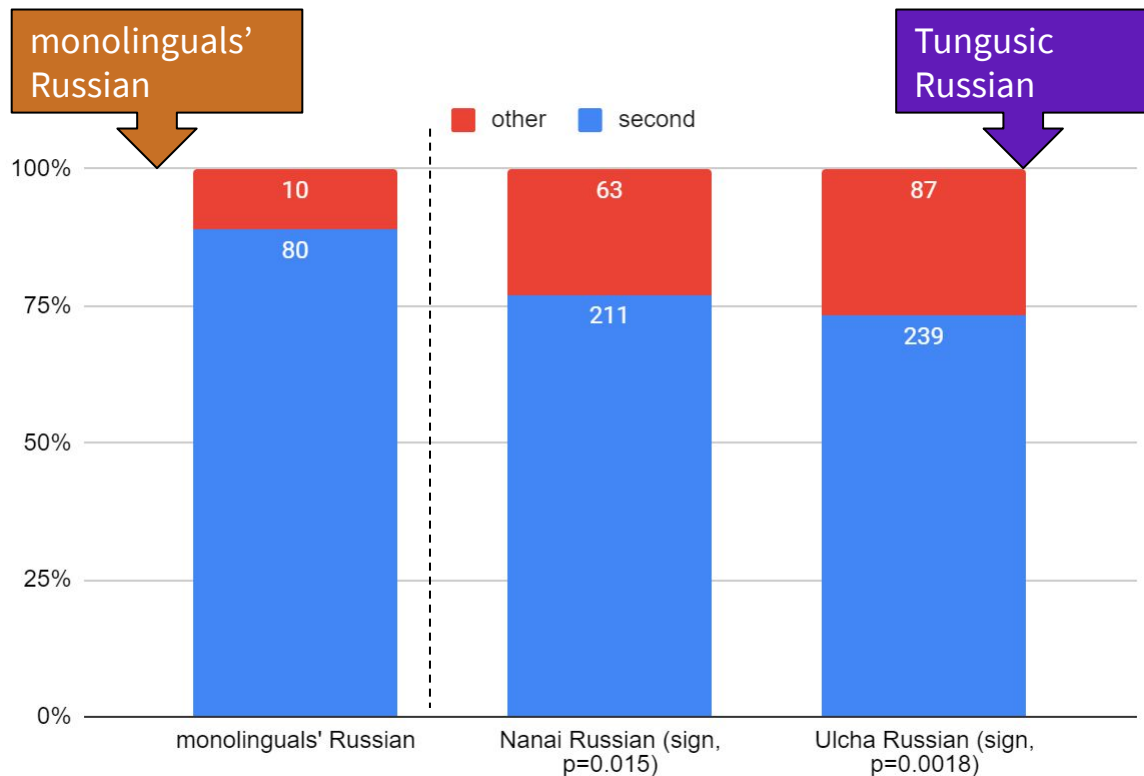


Second position: argumentative uses of že

Expectation: the **second position** is less typical of Tungusic Russian than of monolinguals' Russian

→ CONFIRMED

→ The difference between Nanai Russian and Ulcha Russian is not significant



Postverbal position: argumentative uses of že

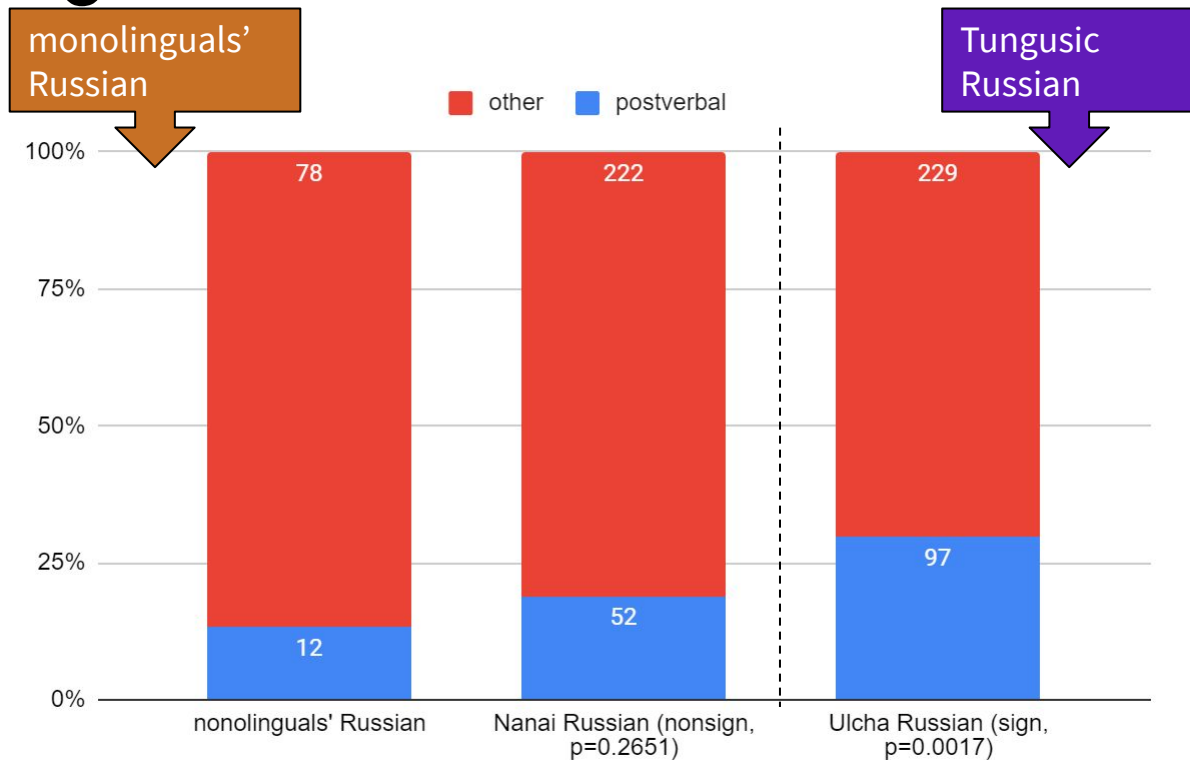
Expectation: the **postverbal position** (as in Nanai and Ulcha) is more typical of **Tungusic Russian** than of **monolinguals' Russian**

→ Ulcha Russian:

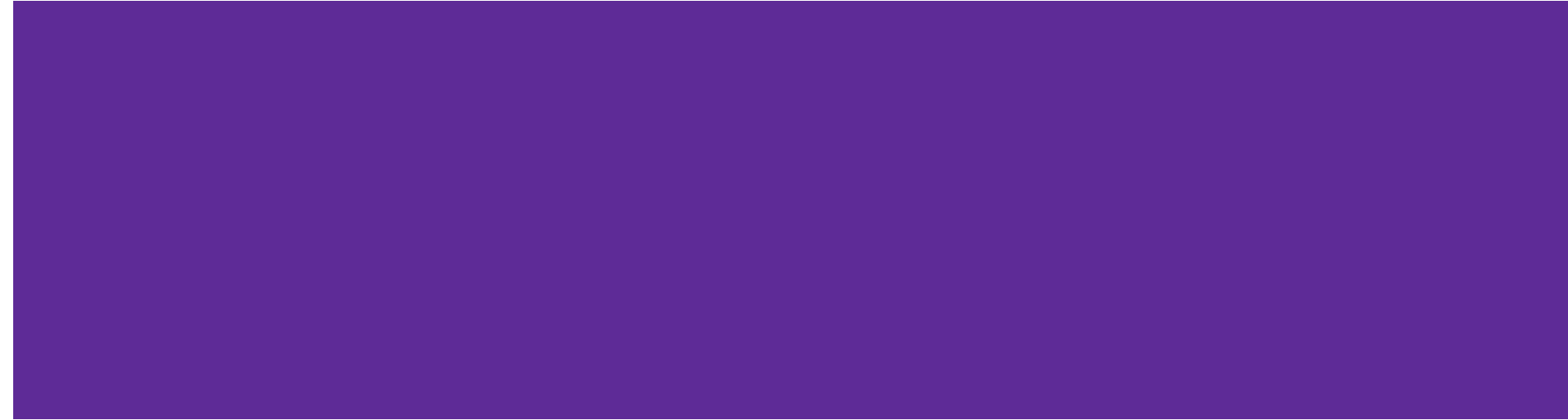
CONFIRMED

→ Nanai Russian:

no significant difference
from monolinguals



Summary and Discussion



Summary

	Nanai Russian	Ulcha Russian	Nanai/Ulcha (guəni~guni)	monolinguals' Russian
frequency	high	high > than in Nanai Russian	high Nanai > Ulcha	low
position	< second	< second > postverbal	postverbal	second, but variation in spoken texts
function	the tendencies are more visible in argumentative uses		Ulcha: argumentative Nanai: bleached	argumentative uses are more prone to non-second positions

Discussion

→ In Ulcha Russian *že* shows a stronger association with the Tungusic *guəni~guni* both in frequency and positional properties than in Nanai Russian

This is because unlike the “bleached” Nanai *guəni*, the Ulcha *guni* has a clear meaning, close to that of the argumentative *že*

→ The contrast between the Nanai and Ulcha samples confirms the relevance of the **language-contact factor**

→ On the other hand, the positional variation of *že* in Tungusic Russian goes in line with the **tendencies reported for monolinguals’ Russian:**

- more variability in spoken texts
- more variability in argumentative uses

Discussion

→ **Further questions** on the enclitic *že* in Tungusic Russian:

- only positional and frequency properties were taken into account
What about semantics?
- Tungusic data were compared to those from “standard” monolinguals (Moscow)
What about monolinguals from the Amur region?

Discussion

⇒ For **structural variation** attested in a contact-influenced language variety:

- sometimes, there is strong evidence of **contact motivation**
- however, even such a contact-induced variation appears to be also supported by **pre-existing tendencies of a non-contact nature**

a typological perspective:

the more languages included ⇒ the more chances to detect contact influence

→ The role of the contact factor:

- sometimes, cannot be proved with confidence by looking at only one language variety (here: Nanai Russian or Ulcha Russian)
- becomes visible when one takes into account **two bilinguals' varieties**
- **possible further “micro-typological” research:** to include comparative data on discourse markers in Russian bilinguals' varieties contacting with genetically and structurally different languages (cf., e.g., Arkhangelskiy 2021 on such markers in Russian spoken by Beserman Udmurts)

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