



KONEEN SÄÄTIÖ
KONE FOUNDATION

LANGUAGE CHANGE IN CASE OF INTERMITTENT CONTACT OF RELATED LECTS

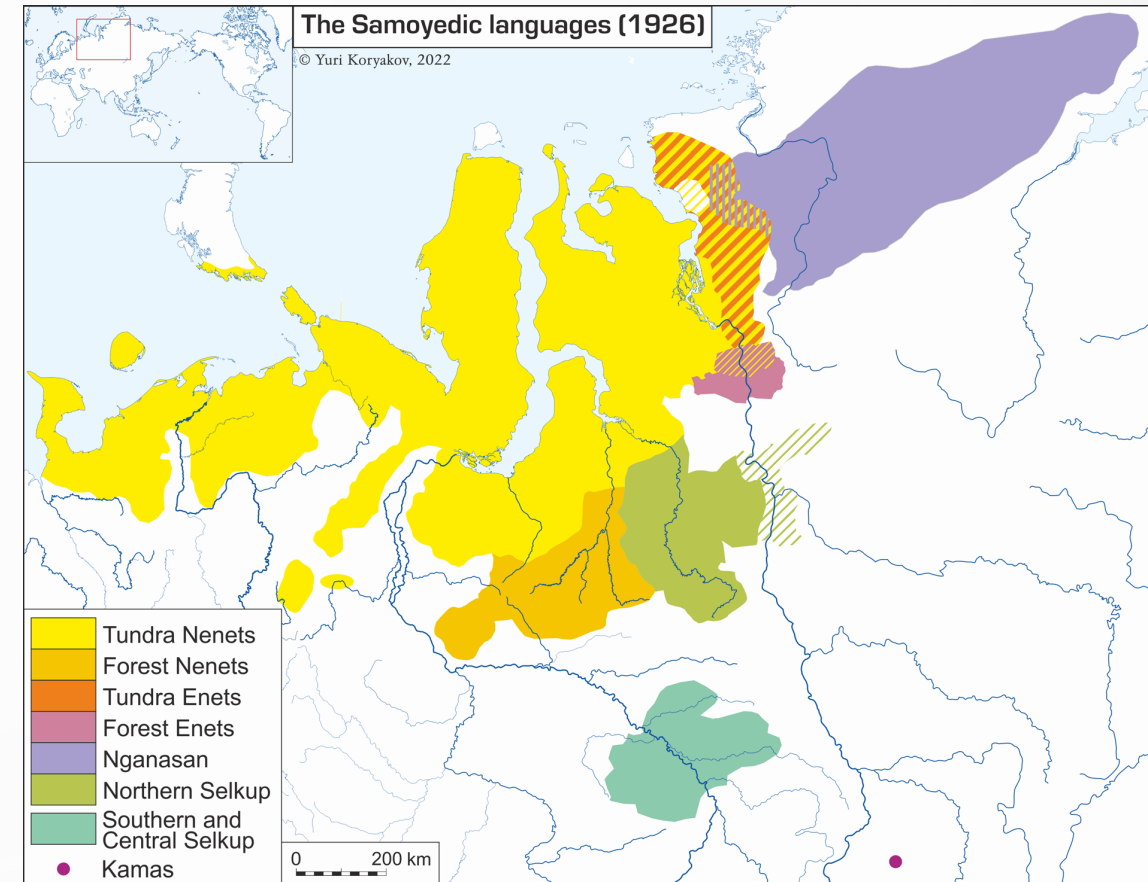
Olesya Khanina & Valentin Gusev



NORTHERN SAMOYEDIC LANGUAGES

Samoyedic

- Nenets (Tundra, Forest)
- Enets (Tundra, Forest)
- Nganasan
- Selkup (Northern, Central-Southern, Ket')
- Kamas
- Mator (also in the Sayans)





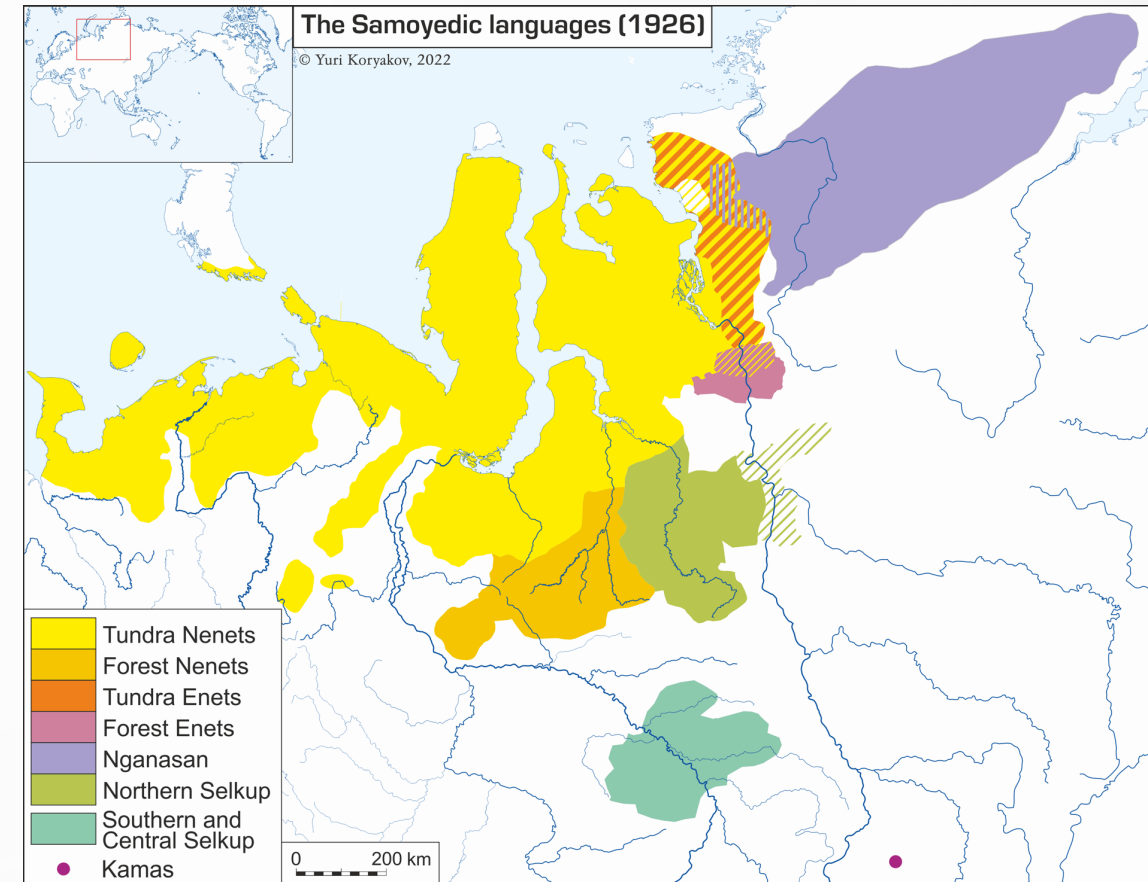
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- in some of them NS represent a unity





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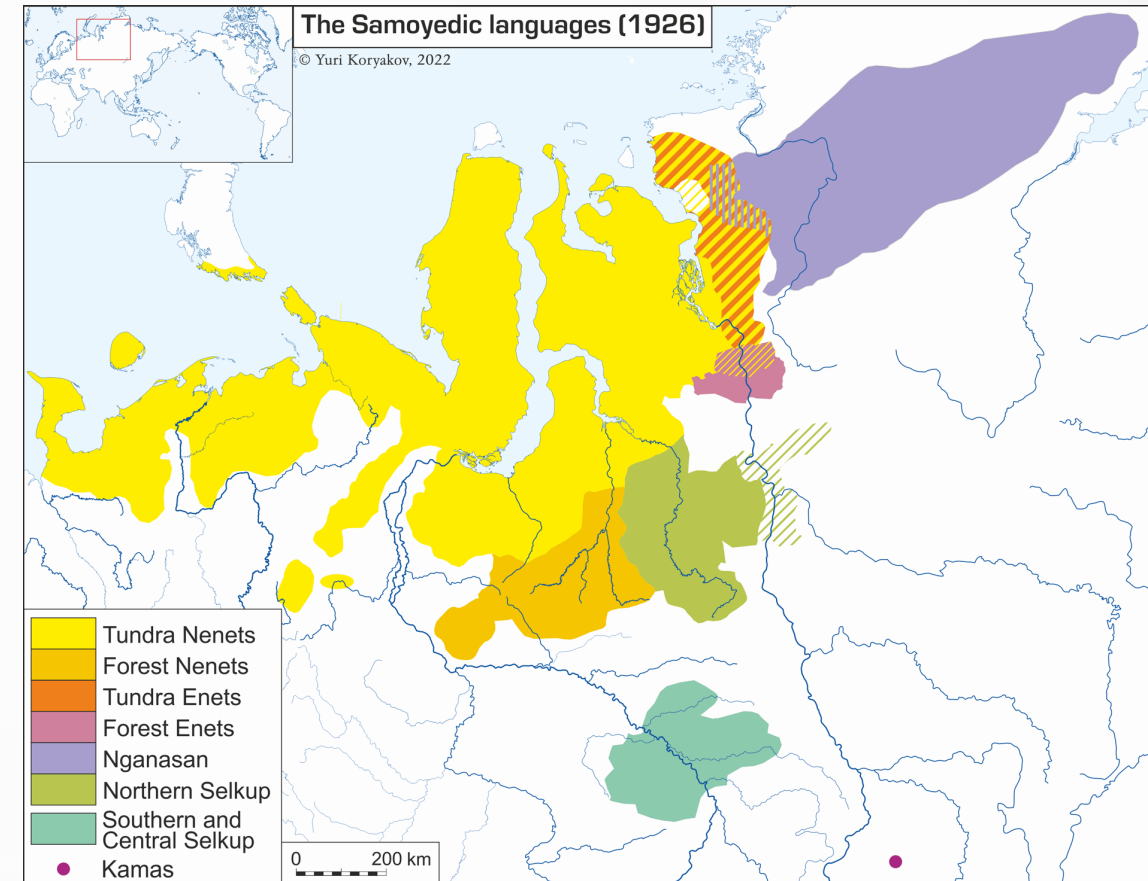
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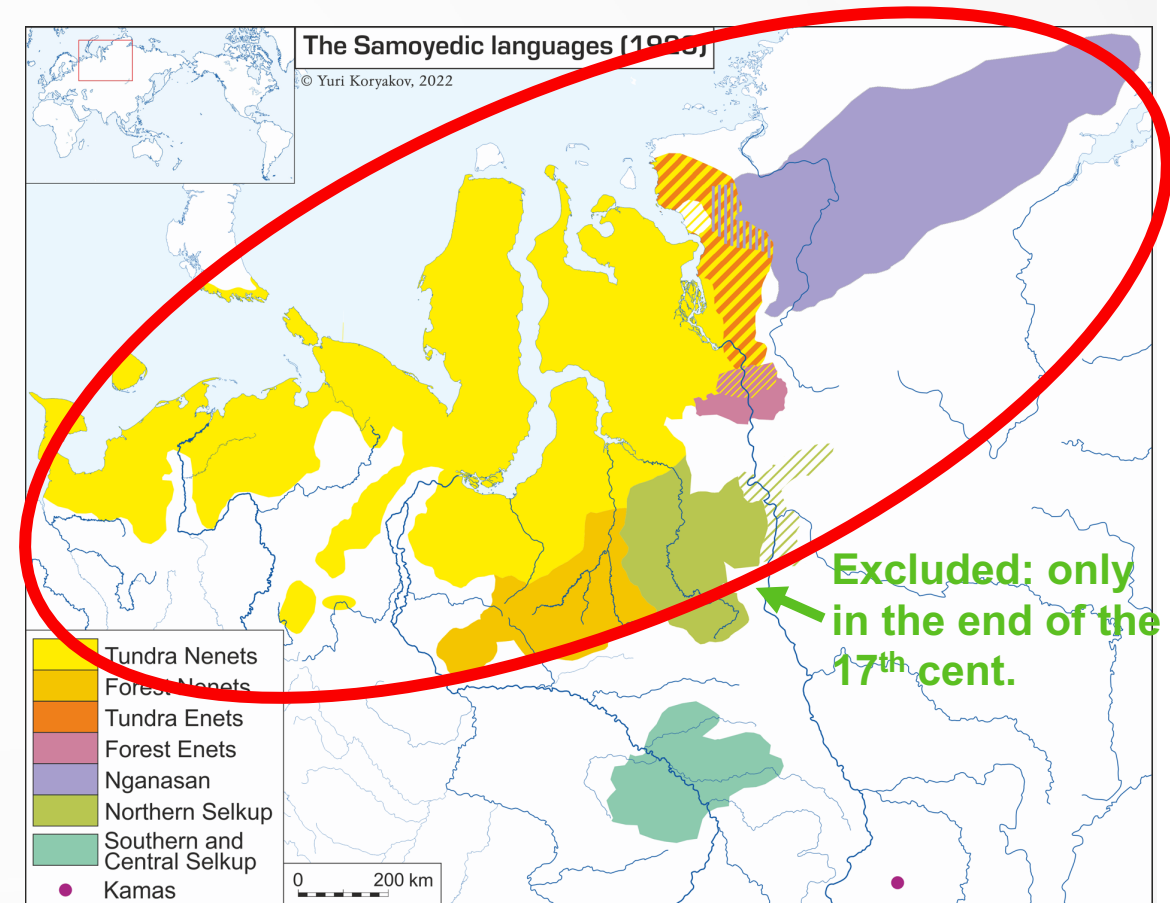
5 languages

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AIMS OF THE STUDY

- in terms of traditional historical linguistics: **to compare the NS languages with an aim of understanding their mutual relationship,**
- in terms of sociolinguistics: **to spot periods of their common history as a communicative network / community of practice / network of interactions,**
- in terms of a more holistic historical linguistics: **to reconstruct the evolution of NS languages as systems shaped by language repertoires and language ideologies of their speakers,**
- in terms of language theory: **to foreground the phenomenon of intermittent language contact in case of related languages and discuss methodologies.**

NB: Arctic as an area where intermittent language contact is exceptionally common



METHODS TO COMPARE RELATED LANGUAGES

- a. shared features in lexicon (e.g. Swadesh list),
- b. shared phonetic changes,
- c. shared morphological features,
- d. shared syntactic features?

Better shared innovations than just shared features,
but it is often unclear whether it is a common innovation or a common retention.



A. LEXICAL MATCHES

- Gusev 2016, Urmanchieva 2023: basic wordlists (100-200 items)
- Urmanchieva 2023, Kaheinen, Accepted: the whole lexicon as reflected in existing dictionaries

	эн. Т	нган.	сельк. С	кам.	мат.
нен.	80,2	69,8	64,6	59,4	65,6
эн.		80,2	65,6	61,5	67,7
нган.			57,3	60,4	64,6
сельк.				59,4	57,3
кам.					60,4

	л.нен.	т.эн.	л.эн.	нг.	ск.	камас.		матор.
т.нен.	82,92%	62,80%	75,40%	50,41%	41,98%	51,30%		73,33%
л.нен.		64,46%	70,73%	49,16%	44,69%	51,69%		74,44%
т.эн.			81,35%	62,18%	45,73%	53,04%		70,78%
л.эн.				54,16%	43,41%	52,58%		73,56%
нг.					40,625%	52,21%		60,67%
ск.						60%		62,22%
камас.								71,59%

- lexical matches both with vs. without expected phonetic correspondences,
- (partial) phoneme recalculation can be observed in clear and recent loans,
→ borrowing with recalculation can be imagined for any other lexical matches
→ so what do lexical matches actually reflect in case of related languages in contact?
(+ methodological problems – accuracy of semantic equivalence; representativeness, etc.)



B. SHARED PHONETIC FEATURES

- Proto-Uralic and Proto-Samoyedic phonologies are reasonably well reconstructed, so here one can easily track all PS phonological segments and their changes:
 - word-initial consonants (17), intervocalic single consonants (13), intervocalic clusters (8), word-final consonants (6), vowels of the 1st syllable (12), vowels of the non-1st syllable (3).
- E.g.: *k before *a > FN *ś*, TN *ś*, FE *ś*, TE *ś*, Ng *k* ⇒ FN+TN+FE+TE
- E.g.: *p > FN *p*, TN *p*, FE *p~f* > *p*, TE *p~f* > *p*, Ng *f~h* > *h* ⇒ FE+TE, FE+TE+Ng, Ng

	FN	TN	FE	TE	Ng		
Word initial							
*p	p	p	p ~ f	p ~ f	f ~ h	FN+TE	In some cases, consonants are palatalized before old front vowels. This is not reflected in the data.
*t	t	t	t	t	t	all	*t' means that both the older and the newer variants have been attached
*k	k	k	k	k	k	all	It might be reasonable to treat all FN consonants as if they were palatalized.
*s	s	s	s	s	s	FN	
*š before back vowels	š	š	š	š	š	FN	
*š before *a	š	š	š	š	š	FN+TE+Ng	
*h							
*w							
*m							
*n							
*l							
*r							
*j							
*i before back vowels	i	i	i	i	i	FN+TE	
*i before *a	i	i	i	i	i	all	
*e before back vowels	e	e	e	e	e	FN+TE+Ng	
*e before *a	e	e	e	e	e	FN+TE+Ng	
*a	a	a	a	a	a	all	
*o before back vowels	o	o	o	o	o	FN+TE+Ng	
*o before *a	o	o	o	o	o	FN+TE+Ng	
*u before back vowels	u	u	u	u	u	FN+TE+Ng	
*u before *a	u	u	u	u	u	FN+TE+Ng	
*y before back vowels	y	y	y	y	y	FN+TE+Ng	
*y before *a	y	y	y	y	y	FN+TE+Ng	

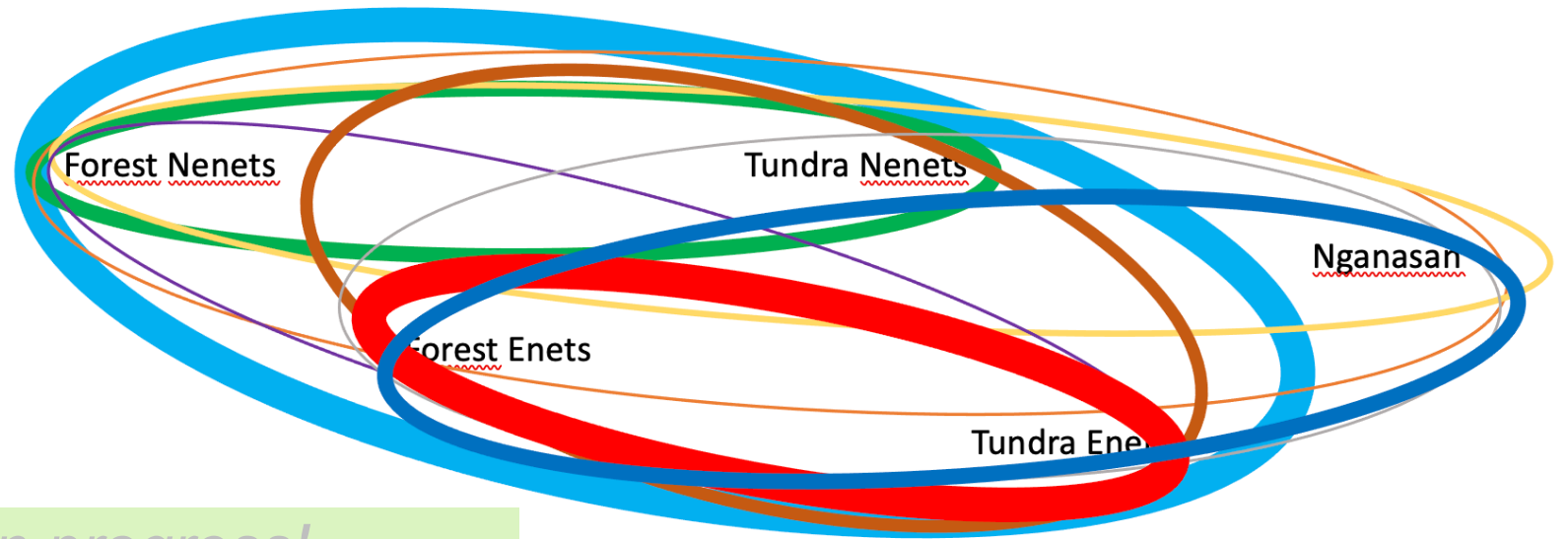
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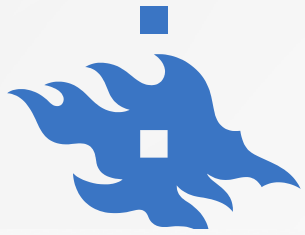


B. SHARED PHONETIC FEATURES

FN+TN+FE+TE	11
FE+TE	10
FN+TN	5
FE+TE+Ng	5
TN+FE+TE	4
FN+TN+Ng	2
FN+TN+FE+Ng	1
FN+FE+TE	1
TNwest+FE+TE	1
TN+FE+TE+Ng	1
	41

Work in progress!
Numbers are not final.





C. SHARED MORPHOLOGICAL FEATURES

all	58	
FE+TE	26	
FN+TN+FE+TE	25	
FN+TN	14	9 Comitative Ng -sabta (also -na)
TE+Ng	13	10 Destinitive
FE+TE+Ng	11	11 Periphrastic forms for dual locative (Ng na, TN n'a, FN n'a, En ne, regular)
FN+TN+FE	8	12 DAT SG differs for poss and non-poss forms
TN+FE+TE	5	13 1SG.NOM has 2 variants without any clear distribution (pragmatic?) En -ja,
TN+FE	3	14 GEN SG 2DU+GEN SG 3DU, ACC SG 2DU+ACC SG 3DU
FE+Ng	3	15 Predicative use of nominals in present + verbal intransitive cross-reference
FN+TN+TE	2	
TN+FE+TE+Ng	2	
TN+Ng	1	
FN+TE+Ng	1	
Ng	8	
FE	6	
TN		
TE		
FN		
	220	

Work in progress! Data are not final.

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METHODOLOGICAL RESERVATIONS

The counting is to an extent ambiguous and thus subjective:

- many phenomena can be formulated in several ways:
 - as a diachronic process (phonetic and/or morphological) vs. as a synchronic contrast (e.g. in each language distinct diachronic processes could lead to an identical synchronic result)
 - as one vs. several features (e.g. if all cases have innovated smth, they can be counted together or separately),
- it depends on our current reconstruction (e.g. if $X > Y$ in some languages and $X > Z$ in others, we see 2 innovations, but if we decide that the protolanguage had Z (not X) then we have only one innovation $Z > Y$ and do not count $Z > Z$)
- what to count in case of differences in data for 18th, 19th, 20th, 21st cent.?
- we could overlook some features (or we have not discovered them yet),

Can we claim that this ambiguity is more or less the same at different levels, and so is levelled?

⇒ **The contrasts in numbers are just rough estimates of what is going on!**



SUMMARY

Phonology

FN+TN+FE+TE	11
FE+TE	10
FN+TN	5
FE+TE+Ng	5
TN+FE+TE	4
FN+TN+Ng	2
FN+TN+FE+Ng	1
FN+FE+TE	1
TNwest+FE+TE	1
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all	58
FE+TE	26
FN+TN+FE+TE	25
FN+TN	14
TE+Ng	13
FE+TE+Ng	11
FN+TN+FE	8
TN+FE+TE	5
TN+FE	3
FE+Ng	3
FN+TN+TE	2
TN+FE+TE+Ng	2
TN+Ng	1
FN+TE+Ng	1
TE	8
FN	6
	5
	2
	0
	220

Work in progress!
Numbers are not final.

Morphology



SUMMARY

Phonology: 26 to 9

FN+TN+FE+TE	11
FE+TE	10
FN+TN	5
FE+TE+Ng	5
TN+FE+TE	4
FN+TN+Ng	2
FN+TN+FE+Ng	1
FN+FE+TE	1
TNwest+FE+TE	1
TN+FE+TE+Ng	1
	41

all	58
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FN+TN+FE+TE	25
FN+TN	14
TE+Ng	13
FE+TE+Ng	11
FN+TN+FE	8
TN+FE+TE	5
TN+FE	3
FE+Ng	3
FN+TN+TE	2
TN+FE+TE+Ng	2
TN+Ng	1
FN+TE+Ng	1
	8
	6
	5
TE	2
FN	0
	220

Work in progress!
Numbers are not final.

Morphology: 65 to 40

Traditional genealogy:
Enets-Nenets together

Secondary convergence
as expected from modern
geographies



DISCUSSION 1

- This study of isoglosses suggests a scenario of a wave-like distribution of changes in Northern Samoyedic, related and neighbouring languages (cf. splits vs. waves in Heggarty et al. 2010).
- We also have non-linguistic evidence (Khanina 2021, 2022):
 - nomadic way of life,
 - some known migrations (last 300 years),
 - several known language shifts (last 200 years),
 - recent ideologies downplaying ancestry and foregrounding neighbourhood (1920s-1950s),
 - passive and active multilingualism (1920s-1970s)
- It explains what kind of social-cultural-historic grounding could trigger this linguistic scenario.
- Besides, it also works as an argument supporting this particular scenario.



DISCUSSION 1

- Similar logic was applied in Good (2023) for Lower Fungom in Africa:
 - linguistic patterns of attraction and repulsion, drawn from linguistic evidence,
 - are paralleled by social patterns, drawn from modern sociolinguistic evidence (patterns of multilingualism, language ideologies, marriage patterns, etc.).
- Also Garrett (2000, 2006) for Indo-European: linguistic patterns are complemented by non-linguistic evidence from archeology (a period of unity, followed by large-scale social disruption, followed by new localized identities).

A promising way to go?

Not to limit ourselves to schematic scenarios of language change, but to check what other disciplines have to offer for a possible sociolinguistic grounding.



DISCUSSION 2

- With constant migrations of speakers, contact among related languages has an unbounded potential of shaping the languages:
 - contact before a divergence event might not differ substantially from contact after it, including the volume of the structural impact at all linguistic levels.
- Under the influence of a contact language (remember relatedness and bilingualism!) some features can turn from 'dormant' (=low frequency), into 'active' (= high frequency) without a real 'innovation'.
- This language change scenario can hardly be unique to the Arctic.
- Studies of the Arctic might help to move away in our conceptualizations of language contact in prehistoric times: from neighbouring settlements to (semi-)nomadic migrating groups in intermittent contact with each other.



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