

# Morphosyntactic complexities in (North-Eastern) Siberia: evidence for contact-induced convergence?

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Our study is devoted to areal linguistic patterns of North-Eastern Siberia and possible (pre)historic contact situations underlying them. We study 6 morpho-syntactic variables on the sample of 69 languages, covering all 9 language families which at least partially enter Siberia. Using an additional 120-language variety sample covering the world we show that this clustering is not well-attributed to chance resemblance, genealogical inheritance and/or general functional-typological selection and indeed bear a contact explanation.

For six variables studied we show (following Ranacher et al., 2021) that geographical inclination towards North-Eastern Siberia is a predicting factor. The patterns we find cross previously widely discussed contact/genealogical subgroupings such as ‘Transeurasian/Altaic’ (see Robbeets & Savelyev, 2020) or Uralic-Yukaghir (see Nikolaeva, 1988). For these patterns we provide separate tentative contact-based scenarios extrapolating back in time to more small-scaled previous analyses (e.g. de Reuse, 1994; Anikin & Helimsky, 2007; Pakendorf, 2020; Pupynina & Aralova, 2021).

For all variables we study, Sakha is an outlier, which speaks for contact scenarios taking place before Sakha’s intrusion (see Pakendorf, 2007: 7-10). For several variables pattern-borrowing without matter-borrowing seems as a most plausible analysis, which speaks for a multilingualism of a special kind (see Epps, 2009: 587-590). Additionally, some distributions provide a clue for more detailed hypotheses.

For example, we propose that the function of Locative case to mark Goal participants is associated with the spread of Northern Tungusic people (see Pakendorf & Aralova, 2020; Whaley & Oskolskaya, 2020). The spread of Nominal Tense is partly attributed to contacts between Tungusic and Samoyedic peoples (see Anikin & Helimsky, 2007), and the presence of dedicated Attenuative in languages of North-Easternmost Siberia can be due to Yupik influence. Finally, some patterns exhibit distributions which cannot be attributed to well-attested contact situations. Thus, presence of dedicated Prolative case and lexically-heavy denominal verbalizers in Northernmost languages can be either attributed to hypothetical Yupik-like substrate (see Gusev, 2021) or to complexification-due-to-isolation (see e.g. Trudgill, 2011: 30-42).

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