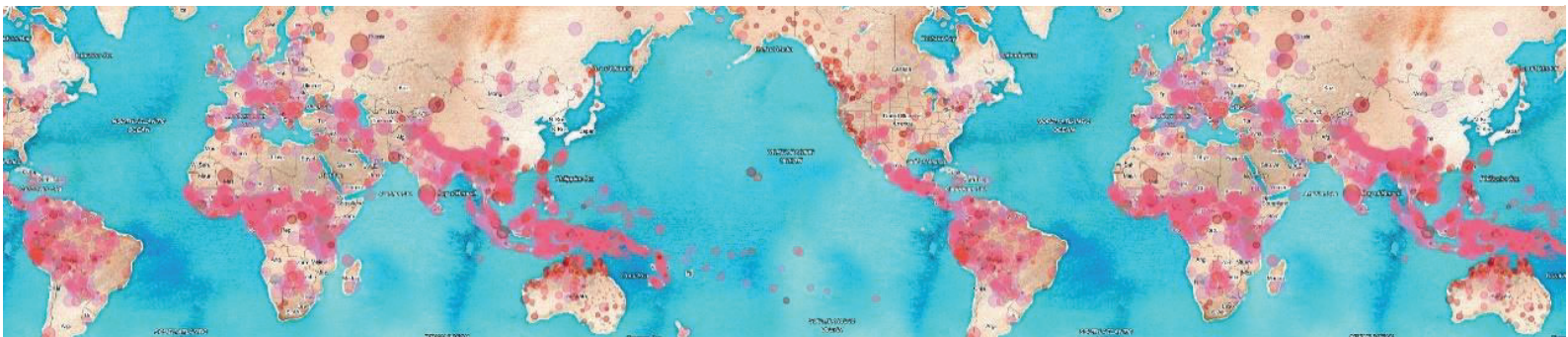


# Mapping the Enets speaking people and their languages

OLESYA KHANINA & YURI KORYAKOV



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# Mapping the Enets speaking people and their languages

**Olesya Khanina**

Institute of Linguistics, Russian Academy of Sciences  
Bolshoj Kislovskij per. 1/1 • 125009 Moscow • Russia &  
Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, University of Helsinki  
Fabianinkatu 24 • 00014 Helsinki • Finland  
[\[olesya.khanina@gmail.com\]](mailto:olesya.khanina@gmail.com)

**Yuri Koryakov**

Institute of Linguistics, Russian Academy of Sciences  
Bolshoj Kislovskij per. 1/1 • 125009 Moscow • Russia  
[\[ybkoryakov@gmail.com\]](mailto:ybkoryakov@gmail.com)

## Abstract

This paper analyses the geographic distribution of the Enets and their neighbours over the last 200 years: all types of interethnic contacts between the Enets and other ethnic groups are discussed in detail, with extensive comments on the languages used in each case. We reconstruct a dynamic picture of multilingual patterns of the Enets in the past and visualize it using maps with arrows added for each pair of languages in contact. A distinction between the two groups of the Enets, Forest Enets and Tundra Enets, is made throughout the paper.

**Keywords:** linguistic maps; linguistic geography; multilingualism; Siberia, Enets

## Introduction

Enets is a highly endangered Northern Samoyedic (Uralic) language spoken in the Tajmyr peninsula in the north of Siberia, Russia. There are two dialects of Enets – Forest Enets (also known as Baj, Pe-Baj) and Tundra Enets (also known as Somatu); they are mutually intelligible, but have a number of clear distinctions in lexicon, phonology, and morphology; some scholars consider Forest and Tundra Enets to be separate languages. Speakers of Forest Enets and Tundra Enets do not consider themselves members of one and the same ethnic group, and in the living memory of the current speakers, the two ethnic groups have essentially never met, occupying territories separated by some 400 km. Currently, Forest Enets has approx. 20–30 speakers and Tundra Enets has approx. 20 speakers, all distributed into several remote settlements. All the modern Enets speakers are over 50 years of age and bilingual in Russian, or trilingual in Russian and Tundra Nenets. Today, neither of the two dialects of Enets is used on an everyday basis.

The Enets, as well as all the other neighbouring ethnic groups formerly practiced hunting, fishing with reindeer herding for transport; they were all nomadic peoples. Large-scale reindeer breeding was typical for the western neighbours of the Enets, the Tundra Nenets, and starting in the 19th century, for some Tundra Enets, and western Nganasans (Dolgix 1960; Vasiljev 1979).

This paper aims to provide an overview of the lands where the two Enets dialects, Forest and Tundra Enets, have been spoken in the last 200 years, accompanied by indications of the lands of their neighbours, and the languages of interethnic communication used in each

case. Until recently, the Lower Yenisei area, home of the two Enets varieties, was very multilingual, and we take the two Enets communities, as the smallest and thus the most multilingual, as a starting point for the reconstruction of a complex picture of small-scale traditional multilingualism typical for this part of the world (see e.g. Dobrushina 2013; Lüpke 2016; Singer & Harris 2016; Vaughan & Singer 2018; di Carlo et al., forthcoming for other studies of the kind).

Every indigenous ethnic group of the area amounted to no more than several hundred and was greatly dependent upon the use of its traditional lands. Meanwhile, the traditional territories of the Forest and Tundra Enets have been constantly changing since the beginning of colonization of Northern Siberia by the Russian Empire in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore, the dynamics of the changes in the Enets territories provides a way to understand the path to the endangerment the Enets language has followed.

We map these changes in the Enets lands, as well as in the lands of their neighbours, using both published ethnographic and linguistic data, as well as our own extensive field data, collected 2005–2017 on the Tajmyr Peninsula; the caption of each map feature references what it is based on. A previous version of this paper was published as (Khanina et al. 2018), though it presented data exclusively on geographic distribution of the Enets. In the present paper, we have expanded our study to other ethnic groups of the area and the languages of interethnic communication used among the Enets and themselves. For the data on multilingual choices, we have referred to two sources. First, (Khanina & Meyerhoff 2018) develops the topic of interethnic communication of the Enets for the second half of 19th century and the

beginning of the 20th century. This is a study of Enets old-life narratives collected in the 1930s in Russian by the ethnographer Boris Dolgix (Dolgix 1961; 1962b): they report quite a number of interethnic contacts and are full of metalinguistic comments. In such a multilingual area, storytellers were attentive to linguistic choices of their characters and often commented on them, and sometimes even on exact words the character used. Second, one of us performed a series of sociolinguistic interviews in 2017 with the Enets, the Nganasan, and the Tundra Nenets elders aimed at the reconstruction of multilingual practices of their parents and grandparents, see (Khanina, forthcoming) for more details on the methodology of this study. These interviews provide data on multilingualism of the Enets and their neighbours in the 1930s – 1970s. As in the stories collected by Boris Dolgix, our respondents showed themselves as very attentive to the linguistic choices of their elder relatives, and could remember a lot regarding the matter. Languages and linguistic practices are and were something eagerly discussed and commented on by everyone in this area, a feature also attested in another multilingual region of Siberia, the Lower Kolyma area (Maria Pupynina, p.c., see also Pupynina & Koryakov, forthcoming), and absent in less multilingual areas of Siberia, e.g. some Even territories in the Eastern Siberia (Brigitte Pakendorf, p.c.).

The rest of this paper is organized in chronological periods, starting with the 19<sup>th</sup> century (there are not enough data on multilingual patterns before that, so we have skipped the earlier time periods and refer any reader interested in them to Khanina et al. (2018)), going to the first third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with data from the detailed 1926 census, and then to the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (1940–1960). Soon after that, Russian started being used as a lingua franca for any interethnic communication in the area, and so no more maps of Enets multilingualism could be produced for later periods.

For each temporal stage, we provide a map showing geographic locations of the two Enets groups and all their neighbours. We comment on contacts of the Tundra Enets and the Forest Enets with each other and with each ethnic and linguistic neighbour they had at the time. The very first section is devoted to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is the most extensive one since all ethnic groups of the area are introduced there.

## The 19th century

We start by discussing Tundra Enets (TE) – Forest Enets (FE) interactions. The former group was truly nomadic with large reindeer herds, while the latter consisted of two groups, a nomadic one and a semi-nomadic one.<sup>1</sup> The semi-nomadic FE had few reindeer, which they used for transport only, and lived on fishing and hunting. From the middle of the 19th century on, the nomadic part of the FE dwelled in summer along the same routes as the TE.

In Figure 1, this summer territory is shown in orange, i.e. the TE area with thin FE grey lines covering it in the north.<sup>2</sup> The territory in question measured around 400×150 km and was inhabited by approx. 200 TE and approx. 150 FE. Let it be noted that such populations densities are rather typical for those northern latitudes, though they get slightly higher as one goes south. As Dolgix (1970b: 122–123, 126) indicates, by the 1926 census the nomadic FE had been linguistically assimilated by the TE: they declared their ethnicity as FE (or rather as one of the FE clans) and their native language as TE. Before this gradual assimilation, these FE, rich in reindeer, kept their native FE, and their TE neighbours spoke their native TE. In winter time, the nomadic Enets groups, both TE and FE, dwelled to the south, in the all-year-round lands of the semi-nomadic FE: the shared winter territory is shown as grey and orange on Figure 1. In the beginning of the 20th century, there were no interethnic marriages between FE and TE (Dolgix 1962a), which allows for a stipulation that there were no such marriages recently before that either, as traditional marriage rules tended to relax and not to become more restrictive in the 20<sup>th</sup> century as compared to the past.

As has already been mentioned, FE and TE are now mutually comprehensible,<sup>3</sup> and the main differences are attested in phonology and lexicon, not in morphosyntax or even syntax. (Khanina et al. 2018) show that in the 17th century FE and TE lands hardly overlapped, but starting at least in the beginning of the 19th century, they were totally overlapping in winter, as indicated in Figure 1 (next page).

We suggest that the modern identical morphosyntax and syntax of TE and FE look a lot like a result of massive interference conditioned by the hundred years of close neighbourhood in winter (and winter is approx. 7 months a year in this part of the world).

<sup>1</sup> Nomadic groups with reindeer cover hundreds of kilometres in their regular migrations, while semi-nomadic groups usually cover only dozens of kilometres.

<sup>2</sup> Here, as well as on all other maps of this paper, the thickness of hashing lines corresponds to the numbers of speakers of the corresponding languages: e.g. if the lines of different colours are of the same thickness, it means the same quantities of speakers of the two languages on the given territory; similarly, the thickness of arrows corresponds to the numbers of bilingual speakers.

<sup>3</sup> We have witnessed several cases of communication between FE and TE when a FE activist Zoja N. Bolina joined us for a TE fieldtrip in 2010: each party spoke their own language, and they could understand each other without any visible problems. Transcription of TE texts by FE speakers was, however, problematic, as it required not global understanding of the whole statement but a minute understanding of every word pronounced.



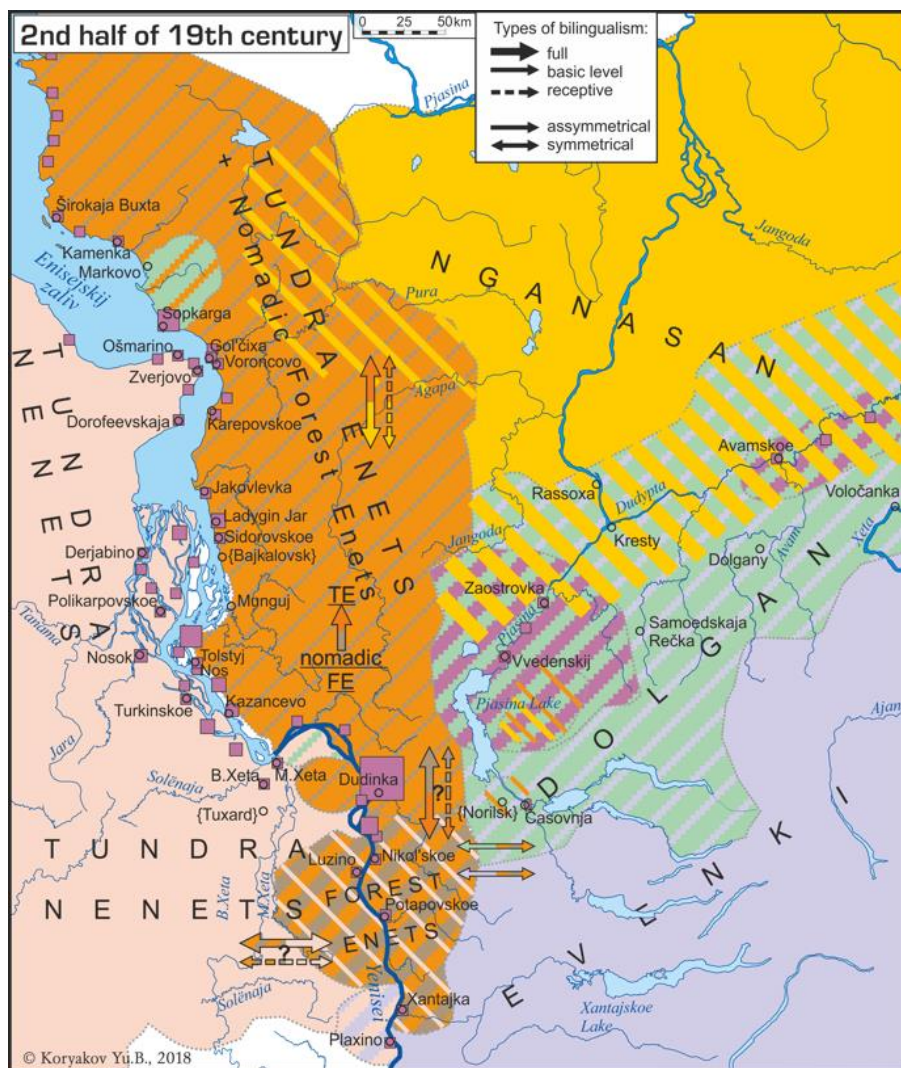


Figure 1: Indigenous languages and languages of interethnic communication of the lower Yenisey in the 2nd half of the 19th century (based on Patkanov 1912; Vasil'ev 1979, 1982; Vasil'ev & Simčenko 1963; Dolgix 1970a; Ostrovskix 1929)

The differences in the phonology and lexicon presuppose a greater distance in other parts of the structure of the two languages than we see now, and close contacts for a prolonged period of time are known to be able to result in secondary morphosyntactic and syntactic convergence in the case of closely related languages.

Given these results of TE – FE contacts, we suppose that in the 19th century there was a massive symmetrical receptive bilingualism of the semi-nomadic FE and the TE: each party spoke their own language, and mutual understanding was full. Alternatives to this could be either one language was more dominant than the other (e.g. asymmetrical bilingualism), or full symmetrical bilingualism of the two ethnic communities. The first alternative was clearly chosen in case of the nomadic FE reindeer-herders, who quickly lost their language to TE. The fact that the semi-nomadic FE did not lose their language at the expense of TE, or vice versa, is an argument for a linguistic symmetry in their communication. Full symmetrical bilingualism of the semi-nomadic FE and the TE was equally possible, but

we consider it slightly less probable due to the greater effort it would have required from each party. These, and other patterns of multilingualism are shown on Figure 1 with corresponding arrows.

Now we turn to the TE–Nganasan interactions. The Nganasans speak a Uralic, northern Samoyedic language, a sister language to Enets, though quite distant. No mutual understanding is possible prior to extensive experience. From at least the 17th century, the Tundra Enets and the western Nganasans were close neighbours, and starting from at least the middle of the 19th century, or even earlier, their interactions were rather peaceful with common intermarriages (Dolgix 1962a). (Vasiljev 1985) citing archival data, reports 20 TE men to be married to Nganasan women and 14 Nganasan men to be married to TE women in the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. At that time, the Tundra Enets were still few in the Tundra Enets lands, and so the Tundra Enets did not marry anyone except the Tundra Enets and the Nganasans, and similarly, the Nganasans did not marry anyone except the Nganasans and the Tundra Enets. Albeit, exogamic marriages were

significantly less numerous than endogamic. Besides, without necessarily marrying each other, Tundra Enets and Nganasan families could dwell or fish together (see their common lands in Figure 1), and the material culture of the two ethnic groups was identical by the end of the 19th century (Dolgix 1949).

(Khanina & Meyerhoff 2018) show that for the Tundra Enets – Nganasan interactions, the choice of a language of interethnic communication was self-evident. It was never commented on by the storytellers and no case was reported when a Tundra Enets and a Nganasan could not understand each other. In the 1930s, as we know from testimonies of the elders now living (Khanina, forthcoming), the two ethnic groups were symmetrically bilingual, though it is hard to say whether it was full or only receptive bilingualism. Most probably, some portion of the population of each ethnic group was fully bilingual, and the other portion – only receptively bilingual. Presumably, this linguistic situation can be extrapolated to the end of the 19th century (see a similar

statement about full symmetrical bilingualism of the two ethnic groups in Helimski 1998), at least we are not aware of any facts contradicting it.

As for Enets contacts with the Tundra Nenets (also Uralic, Northern Samoyedic), there was basically no summer interaction between the TE and the Tundra Nenets until the beginning of the 20th century. By the middle of the 19th century, the Tundra Nenets displaced the TE on the left bank of the Yenisey river (Vasiljev 1979), so that the TE left these lands completely. In the south, some Tundra Nenets were seen only in the FE lands, aka the winter TE lands, on both sides of the Yenisei river (cf. thin pink Tundra Nenets lines on the FE – TE territory in the south on Figure 1). At the end of the 19th century, FE material culture was replaced by Tundra Nenets culture: Vasiljev (1985) cites Middendorf (1878) who witnessed FE families still wearing TE – Nganasan clothes (i.e. the traditional Enets clothes), while in the 20th century, the FE were all known to share material culture, including clothing, with the Tundra Nenets. Such borrowing of material culture suggests a higher degree of the FE-Tundra Nenets contacts by the end of the 19th century than half a century earlier.

Occasional interethnic marriages with Tundra Nenets are noted both for the FE and the TE (Dolgix 1962a), though for the TE it is difficult to assess whether this was due to summer contacts in the north of the TE territory, or winter contacts in the south of their territory.

In the narratives mentioned (Dolgix 1961; 1962b), referring to the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, both TE and FE are described as regularly meeting Tundra Nenets. As for the means of communication during such encounters, unlike the case of TE – Nganasan contacts discussed above, the language was actually mentioned by the storytellers, though rarely.<sup>4</sup> This contrasts not only with the TE-Nganasan interactions where no language is mentioned at all but also with FE/TE – Evenki/Dolgan interactions, where the language is mentioned in the majority of cases, see (Khanina & Meyerhoff 2018). Thus, the choice of a language in the TE/FE – Tundra Nenets interaction was almost self-evident for the storytellers, i.e. known from the general knowledge of the world and not from the context of this particular encounter.

If we again refer to testimonies of the elders now living (Khanina, forthcoming) and extrapolate the sociolinguistic situation of the 1930s to the past, we would suggest that there was symmetric bilingualism, more often full than receptive (the languages are closer to each other than in the case of TE – Nganasan, but more distant than FE – TE). In the 1930s, it was usual for the Tundra Nenets

living near the Enets to speak the language of their neighbours, and vice versa.

However, it is unclear how plausible such extrapolation is, since there were much fewer Tundra Nenets on the Enets lands in the 19th century than in the middle of the 20th century, but at least it does not contradict the (Khanina & Meyerhoff 2018) finding on the self-evidence of the choice. To provide for the self-evidence, the language choice must be more or less universal, i.e. not a matter of an individual's choice or abilities. Arrows in Figure 1 show the two possibilities, full symmetrical bilingualism or receptive symmetrical bilingualism with a question mark between them.

Finally, we come to the two remaining ethnic groups, neighbouring the Enets, the Evenkis and the Dolgans. The Evenkis speak a Tungusic (Altaic) language, and the Dolgans speak a Turkic (also Altaic) language with a heavy external substrate: Evenki, Nganasan, and local Russian. Actually, in the 19th century, the two ethno-linguistic groups were differentiated neither in the local variety of Russian (both were *Tungus*), nor in the local Samoyedic languages: TE, FE, Nganasan, or Tundra Nenets. So, while Figure 1 could be drawn based on the location of the Evenki clans that are known to have become the Dolgans by the end of the 19th century, neither of the reports dating from the 19th century, including those analysed in (Khanina & Meyerhoff 2018), nor the living memory of the modern Samoyedic elders make a distinction between the two.

Interactions with the Tungus were mostly hostile: both the Enets and the Tungus used to steal women or reindeer from each other, and this was often reciprocated. It is unclear when exactly these practices stopped: they are reported for the 19th century, but not for the 20th century. As Khanina & Meyerhoff (2018) show, in negotiations around these conflicts, both the TE/FE and the Tungus could express themselves in the language of the other party, when they needed to. Since the languages are very different (Turkic, if Dolgan, or Tungusic, if Evenki vs. Samoyedic) and these conflicts were not an everyday matter, full knowledge of Evenki/Dolgan by the FE/TE or of FE/TE by the Evenki/Dolgan can hardly be supposed. Rather, we hypothesize symmetrical, full bilingualism with only basic linguistic skills and only applied to those FE/TE and Evenki/Dolgan who dwelled near the border dividing the lands of these ethnic groups.

Summing up, by the end of the 19th century, all TE spoke or understood Tundra Nenets and FE, the majority of TE spoke or understood Nganasan and had some basic skills in Dolgan or Evenki. All FE spoke or understood Tundra Nenets and could at least understand TE, while all

<sup>4</sup> There were only two such mentions, and Tundra Nenets was chosen in both cases: it is unclear, though, whether this was the rule for TE/FE-Tundra Nenets encounters, or, in terms of (Khanina & Meyerhoff 2018) these were examples of asymmetrical convergence with the parameter determining

the direction of convergence being contextual social power, as was typical for FE/TE-Evenki or FE/TE-Selkup interactions. Indeed, in the two situations reported, the Nenets truly had the contextual social power.



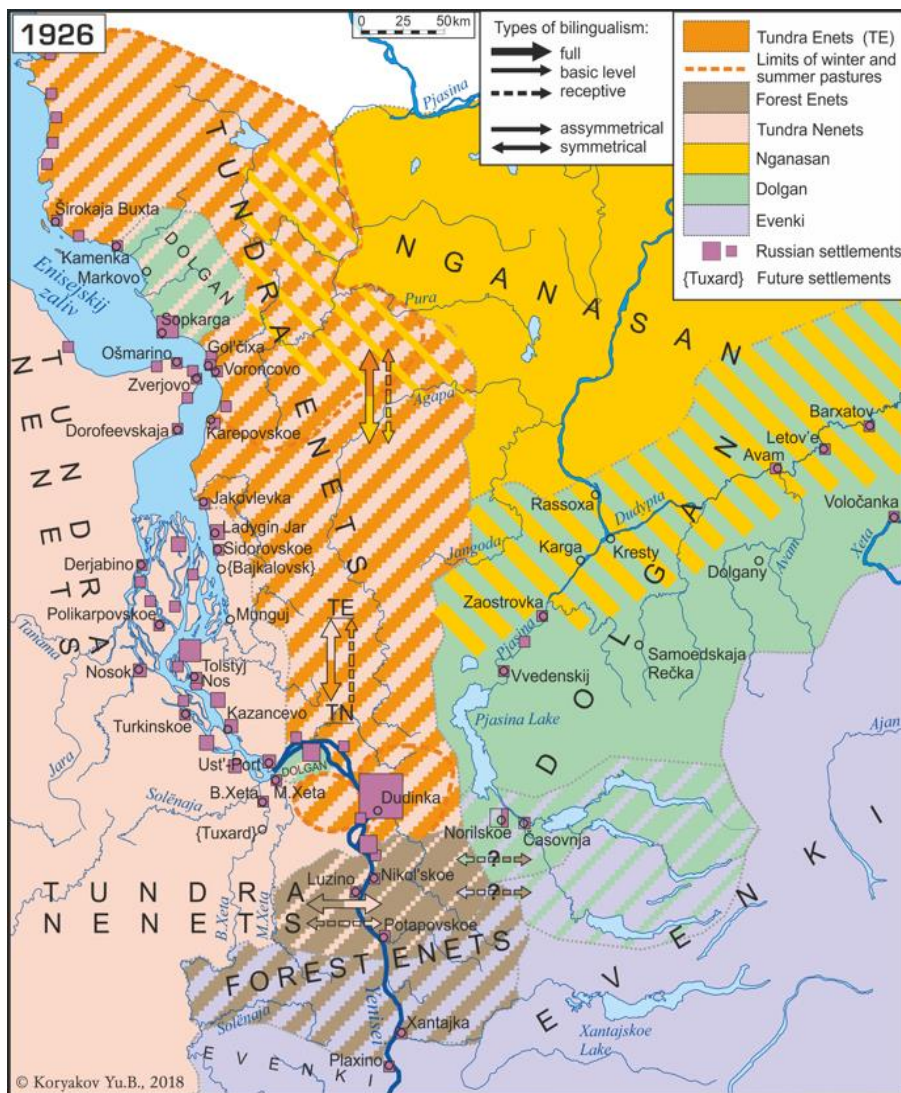


Figure 2: Indigenous lgs. and lgs. o. interethnic communication o. the lower Yenisei in 1926 (based on Vasil'ev 1970, 1985; Dolgix 1946, 1962b, 1963, 1970a+b; Materialy 1928)

nomadic FE spoke TE; the majority of FE had some basic skills in Dolgan or Evenki.

### First third of the 20th century (=1926)

A very detailed Circumpolar census was performed in Russia in 1926: it was a part of an all-Russian census, but with additional questions for the northern territories. Most data used in this section come from the census materials, in particular detailed statistics of interethnic marriages. The latter are particularly useful as a direct measure of the amount of interethnic communication taking place in the area.

By the time of the census, the TE had stopped visiting the FE southern territories in winter, and the nomadic FE switched to TE completely. Thus, the TE and the FE speaking groups stopped sharing their lands, see Figure 2: from this time onward, they dwelled in different grounds, and the distance between them was only increasing with time, with the TE lands concentrating

further and further north, and the FE lands concentrating further and further south.

The interaction between the TE and the Nganasans remained intensive, as it was in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Dolgix (1962a) reports 23% (16 men of 70) of the western Nganasans to be married to TE women, and 20% (13 men of 64) of the TE to be married to Nganasan women. Altogether Nganasan families made 9% of all families in the TE lands. Families were patrilocal, so that the 9% comprise only families with Nganasan husbands dwelling in the shared TE-Nganasan lands, though there were also Nganasan women who could dwell with their TE husbands either in the same joint lands, or in the TE only lands, see Figure 2. This presence, as the numbers show, was not overwhelming, but importantly stable in time, though we have no exact numbers for the earlier periods. The TE and the Nganasans were also indistinguishable for more recent inhabitants of the area, namely the Russians and the Dolgans: in both languages, they are called by one and the same word (*samojad*/*samodi* in Russian, see (Dolgix 1961; 1962b); *xamyj* in Dolgan, the author's own field

data<sup>5</sup>), though all the other local languages, Tundra Nenets, FE, TE, and Nganasan, have distinct words for each of the two ethnic groups. As for languages of communication, we assume the same massive symmetrical bilingualism between the TE and the Nganasans for this period as for the 19<sup>th</sup> century (see arguments above).

The Tundra Nenets started their influx in the TE lands on the right bank of the Yenisei in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, see Figure 2. According to Vasiljev (1970: 108-110), the Tundra Nenets appeared in this area, as Tundra Nenets men used to cross the Yenisei river to get recruited as herders by rich TE reindeer owners. Later they would occasionally marry TE women and dwell with their families in the TE lands, possibly also marrying their sisters off to their new TE relatives. By 1926, Dolgix (1962a) reports 25% percent of the families of the area to be Tundra Nenets (i.e. with Tundra Nenets husbands); one third of these families were mixed with TE, and two thirds were exclusively Tundra Nenets; in

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *hāmaj* 'Nganasan' in (Stachowski 1993: 99).

their turn, 27% (17 men of 64) of the TE men were married to Tundra Nenets women.<sup>6</sup> Noteworthy, TE women were usually not brought away to the Tundra Nenets lands across the Yenisei river, so the principle of patrilocality was not followed in this case. In their expansion, which actually continued for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Tundra Nenets men dwelled on the lands of their wives.

Similarly, they learned their wives' language. Modern interviews with the elders of the area confirm that all local Tundra Nenets men in the 1930s – 1950s spoke TE, as it was the main language of the area at that time. Thus, the newcomers aimed to strengthen their stakes by acquiring and using this language. Some Tundra Nenets, mainly women, are yet reported to have only had a receptive comprehension of TE but were unable to speak it, so that their TE husbands either spoke Tundra Nenets to them, or each party spoke their own language. Arrows on Figure 2, thus, reflect massive bilingualism of the Tundra Nenets in TE on the right bank of the Yenisei river, partly full, partly receptive. However, it was not asymmetric, as most TE could also speak Tundra Nenets. Let us explain how we know this. As the same interviews show, by the 1930s – 1950s all TE could speak Tundra Nenets, and the previous section devoted to the 19<sup>th</sup> century described the TE as regularly meeting the Tundra Nenets in the southern lands, where the former dwelled in the winter months, and spoke their language, Tundra Nenets. Thus, the sociolinguistic situation of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, on the one hand, and the same sociolinguistic situation of the 1930s – 1950s, on the other hand, can be safely extrapolated to the intermediate time period, that of the first third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Figure 2 shows some Dolgans to appear in the TE lands, though they kept themselves apart and mostly practiced endogamy: only 3% (2 men of 64) TE men were married to Dolgan women, and the proportion was the same for Tundra Nenets men (Dolgix 1962b). The interviews reflecting the 1930s – 1950s period do not describe any ability to speak Dolgan as common in the area: the Dolgans are reported to have lived separately and have communicated amongst themselves only. As for the Dolgans that are shown on Figure 2 as south-eastern neighbours of the TE, the two ethnic groups were not direct neighbours here. Though not visible on a map, the TE and the Dolgan lands were separated by a stretch of land where no one dwelled, so no interethnic contact is to be commented on there.

Now we turn to FE contacts with their neighbours. In the first third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the FE continued to live hand in hand with the Tundra Nenets. The sociolinguistic situation was very similar to the one observed in the case of the TE–Tundra Nenets contacts, though more advanced by several decades. As early as the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was massive symmetrical bilingualism (unclear,

full or receptive) among the FE and the Tundra Nenets, and the same bilingualism is reported for the 1930s – 1950s in the interviews. As in the TE – Tundra Nenets case, we extrapolate this bilingualism to the intermediate time period, and suppose that all FE and all Tundra Nenets living in the FE lands or adjacent to them could at least comprehend each other, or even speak each other's languages, see Figure 2.

Contacts between the FE and the Dolgans/Evenkis is the most unclear case in the whole story of the first third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Unlike instances of interethnic communication amongst the FE/TE and all other ethnic groups discussed so far, there was no continuity among the Dolgans and the Evenkis in the sociolinguistic situation. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the FE/TE could speak some basic Dolgan/Evenki, and vice versa, but by the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as the interviews with the elders of the area report, they used only a lingua franca, Russian or Russian-based pidgin Govorka (for more information on the latter, see Gusev 2013, Stern 2005; 2012; Urmanchieva 2010). Thus, in the absence of sociolinguistic data pertaining to the FE – Dolgan/Evenki contact in the first third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there is no possibility to predict when the symmetric basic bilingualism stopped and the use of the lingua franca was introduced. Note, however, that in the first third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century interethnic communication with the Dolgans/Evenkis is relevant for the FE only: the TE stopped coming to the lands neighbouring with the Dolgan/Evenki lands in winter.

Summing up, in the 1920s – 1930s, all TE spoke Tundra Nenets, and the majority of TE spoke or understood Nganasan. All FE spoke or understood Tundra Nenets, while there is not enough information regarding their ability to speak or understand Dolgan/Evenki.

### **Middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (=1940-1960)**

By the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Enets had expanded both to the west and to the east (see Figure 3), though neither expansion was ultimately to their linguistic benefit. Being a small ethnic group, they found themselves among much larger groups, and so they were quickly linguistically and culturally assimilated by the latter. Here we are referring to the TE migration to the Nganasan lands in the north-east, and the FE migration to the Tundra Nenets lands in the south-west.

The TE migration to the Nganasan lands involved a large portion of the population, though more than half of the TE remained in their traditional lands (exact numbers are unavailable). Nonetheless, the continuing Tundra Nenets expansion to this area meant that this significant loss in the number of TE eventually led to their linguistic assimilation by the Tundra Nenets even in their native lands. Linguistically, it did not yet produce any

<sup>6</sup> Someone's ethnicity is counted by father in this area, so some of the mentioned Tundra Nenets women could actually be

born from Tundra Nenets men and TE women in the very beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.







traditional reindeer herding for much longer, and actually practises it today, and so Russian did not win here as spectacularly as in other parts of the Tajmyr Peninsula. That is why we can see the linguistic result of the assimilation process here: today in this area, all descendants of the FE speak Tundra Nenets and Russian, but not FE.

All the other languages of interethnic communication used during this period, as we know them from the interviews with the elders living now, have already been discussed in the previous section: TE – Tundra Nenets, TE – Dolgan, FE – Tundra Nenets in the east, and FE – Evenki/Dolgan, see Figure 3.

Summing up, in the 1940s – 1960s, all TE spoke Tundra Nenets, and all TE living in the Nganasan lands also spoke Nganasan and some Govorka. All FE spoke Tundra Nenets and some Govorka.

### Conclusion

This paper has presented a lingvo-geographic history of the lower Yenisey area from the perspective of the Tundra Enets and Forest Enets ethnolinguistic communities. Starting from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a number of local patterns of multilingualism have been reconstructed, and then we have shown how various migration processes changed these patterns in each individual case. Ultimately, these population movements led to an incipient linguistic assimilation of both Enets communities by their neighbours, which was interrupted by the arrival of dominant Russian to the area in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. From that point on, most interethnic communication has taken place in Russian, and new generations of ethnic Enets have acquired only Russian as their first language. This reconstruction of sociolinguistic details of language contact in the area is a major asset for a study of linguistic convergence in these languages, which is undertaken by the authors and their colleagues beyond this publication. Besides, a possible wider impact of this linguistic and anthropological research on general linguistics is anticipated in the form of more attention to minute descriptions of particular contexts of small-scale multilingualism. Given that this state of society is primordial for the world, more case studies from around the world are definitely needed to understand better this condition of human interactions, as opposed to globalized societies of today.

Finally, a word on the benefit of mapping in this study is necessary, beyond the mere production of illustrative material which serves to ease the comprehension of the paper. While the authors had had an understanding of the general reciprocal location of each ethnic group in question, the requirement to draw exact lines on a map stimulated more research in the ethnolinguistic history of the area, which in turn led to new discoveries in the ways people have actually interacted. In other words, we as linguists have treated the case in question in simplified terms before the production of these maps. Summing up,

the maps turned out to be not just a side product or an illustration of our findings, but a useful analytic tool asking for more rigour and accuracy that would be applied in this study otherwise.

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