

## Lower Kolyma and Alazeya multilingualism and its linguistic outcomes

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The tundra area surrounding Kolyma and Alazeya rivers near the Arctic Ocean was a place of long-standing language contact. Currently this area is assigned to Nizhnekolymskiy district of Yakutia, Russian Federation. Here the traditional territories of nomadic Chukchi, Yukaghir, Even and Yakut tribes meet. Along the rivers lived settled Russians and Russified Yukaghirs, whose fisherman villages in the mid-1930s were replaced by Soviet-built settlements. Yukaghirs and Evens from this area were ‘true polyglots of the tundra’ as was noted by Waldemar Jochelson, who visited the area in the end of 19th century (Jochelson 1926: 46). In this talk we will present the results of a socio-linguistic study as well as some preliminary results on the linguistic traits that resulted from the contact between Even (Tungusic), Yakut (Turkic), Chukchi (Chukotko-Kamchatkan), and Tundra Yukaghir (Yukaghir family); for this study we exclude the influence of Russian.

In 2018 we conducted a sociolinguistic survey in Cherskiy, Kolymskoye and Yakutsk targeting people having at least one parent who was born in Nizhnekolymskiy district. According to this study, 46 out of 77 respondents born in 1938-1989, i.e. 60% of the subjects, are competent (at least receptively) in three or more languages. The linguistic repertoires always involve Russian and include at least two of the set of Even, Yakut, Chukchi, and Yukaghir languages.

Linguistic outcomes of multilingualism are different for Chukchi, Yukaghir, and Even. In Kolyma Chukchi, which is very similar to the variants spoken in Chukotka, the influence of contact is minimal. There are only two borrowings from Yukaghir (both fish names). This can be explained by the fact that Chukchis rarely spoke other languages except the Chukchi-Russian trade jargon which was used only by men who maintained trade relations with the Russians. Yukaghir and Even people who remained in direct contact with the neighbouring Chukchi nomadic groups spoke fluent Chukchi, Yakut and sometimes Russian. Occasionally they served as interpreters for Russian inspectors, see Pupynina & Koryakov (2019). In the Chukchi speech of one consultant of Yukaghir origin we sometimes observed use of the Yakut question particle =*du*.

There are multiple lexical borrowings from Even and Yakut into Tundra Yukaghir, such as Even kinship terms, including the basic words *ama*: ‘father’ and *ene*: ‘mother’ and Yakut adverbs *olus* ‘very, quite’, *naha*: ‘very, excessively’.

Even spoken in the studied area belongs to the western group of Even dialects. It is close to Allaikha Even spoken in the adjacent Allaikha district (Dutkin 1995). There are several lexical features shared by the Lower Kolyma, Allaikha and Sakkyryr dialects (all of them Western dialects), such as: *uten* ‘house’, *kutlen* ‘small’, *kiego* ‘grandfather’. We found only a few lexemes borrowed from Yukaghir which are shared with Allaikha Even: *amun* ‘bone’, *ian~jan* ‘axe’. But in texts recorded from Even-Chukchi-Yakut multilinguals originating from Nizhnekolymskiy district, there are multiple Yakut borrowings, such as *bayar* ‘perhaps’, *na:r* ‘always’, *bukatin* ‘completely’, the discourse particle Even *bolla* < Yakut *buollayına* – the same borrowings are also frequent in another Western Even dialect, Lamunkhin, spoken in Kobyay District of Yakutia.

Thus, these languages show different amounts of linguistic traits caused by the multilingual situation. One of the factors determining linguistic outcomes is definitely the intensity of contact – and this explains the minimal contact influence found in Chukchi. The difference between the contact influence of Yakut on Yukaghir and Even remains to be investigated.

References:

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