

The expression of comparison in Khanty dialects (A case study concerning language contact)

In the majority of Khanty dialects, comparative constructions contain three elements of Komi origin: 1) the comparative marker *-čək/-šək* which was originally a diminutive-moderative particle and was used to express smaller differences; 2) the particle or prefix *met/mätä* serving as the marker of the superlative form of adjectives; and 3) the postposition *kĩńśa/kəŋča/kińt'ä* meaning in 'relation to', which took the place of the ablative case marker and/or postposition. These elements can be found in all varieties apart from the Eastern most Vakh and Vasjugan varieties.

Komi and Ob-Ugric have been in contact since the 15th century. Komi influence in Ob-Ugric is evident from the high number of loanwords (there are 369 Komi loanwords in Khanty and 338 in Mansi. Most of them are nouns, but adjectives, verbs, postpositions, adverbs and particles were also borrowed from Komi. An example of syntactic influence is the appearance of the conditional particle *ke, kę* and the emergence of conditional sentence structure as well as the change of the comparative construction discussed in this study.

We claim that the Komi and Ob-Ugric peoples' trading with each other played a role in the appearance of Komi elements in comparative constructions and when comparing their goods for sale, they needed expressions which were more marked than the ones they already had in their language. Redundancy is usually unavoidable in multilingual environments.

Keywords: Komi, Ob-Ugric, comparative construction, language contact, bilingualism

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