

Placeholders and other fillers in Northern Selkup



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Outline

- *Introduction*
- *Data: oral speech and the way of its fixation*
- *Placeholders: m̄*
- *Other fillers*
- *Switched/borrowed fillers*
- *Conclusion*

Selkup: Samoyed branch of Uralic family

Population census 2010

Number 3612

Claim Selkup to be mothertongue 1334 (36,6%)

Selkup speakers 945 (25,9%) /ab. 600

Northern Selkup

Number 1811

Claim Selkup to be mothertongue 1271 (70%)

Selkup speakers 866 (49%) /ab.600

Southern Selkup

Number 1181

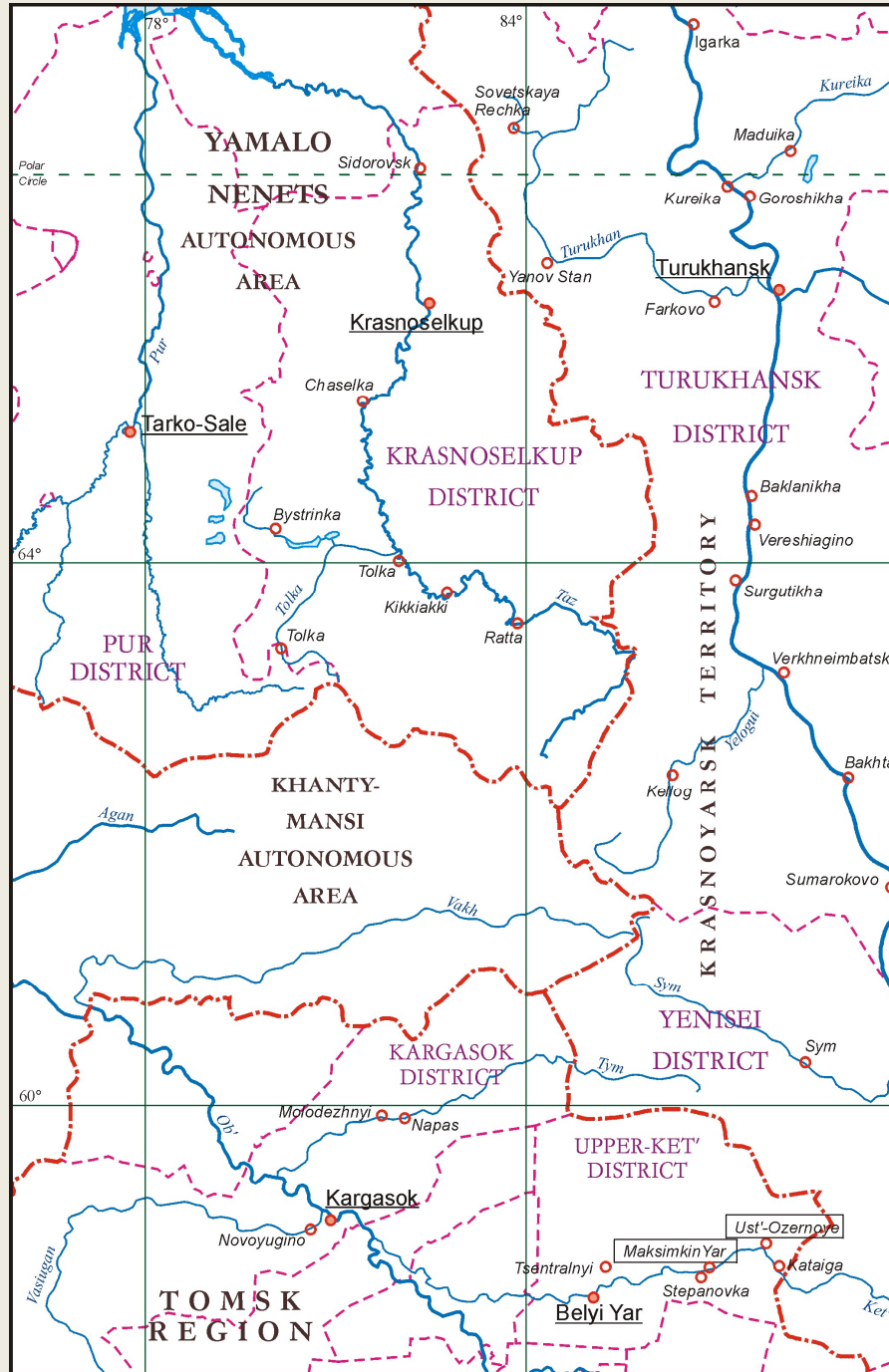
Claim Selkup to be mothertongue 22 (1,9%)

Selkup speakers 50 (4%) / under 10 (3)

Selkup is a Uralic language (Samoyedic branch) spoken in West Siberia by about 600 people (including half-speakers and rememberers). Up to recently Northern Selkup was regarded as a dialect group, since recently it has received a status of a language separate from Southern Selkup.

Языки Сибири





State of affairs

Northern Selkup placeholders and other fillers (hesitation markers) (see Fox 2010; Podlesskaya 2010) were mentioned in Selkup grammars (Prokofiev 1935; Kuznetsova et al. 1980; Helimski 1998; Kazakevič 2022), but no detailed description of this field has been done yet.

Data

- *Georgii and Ekaterina Prokofiev's Corpus. (1925–1928).*
- *Liudmila Varkovitskaya's Corpus. (1941)*

The texts of these two corpora were dictated by the story-tellers and the researchers **manually wrote** them **down**. As a result, they are practically devoid of fillers of all kinds. The words used as fillers can be found there, but mostly in other functions.

- *Ariadna Kuznetsova and her group's corpus (1970–1977), published in (Kuznetsova et al. 1992)*

The texts were **audio recorded**, but most of the fillers were cleared up while the texts were edited for the publication.

- *Multimedia Computer archive of the LALS RCC Moscow State University / Laboratory for research and preservation of minority languages, Institute of Linguistics, RAS (1996–2015), **audio and video fixation**.*

The main source of fillers of all kinds.

The most widespread placeholder word in all the Northern Selkup dialects is *m̄i* ‘thing, something’

In Selkup grammars *m̄i* is regarded as indefinite pronoun, mostly used as a joker able to substitute any word the speaker cannot remember or does not feel it necessary to precise.

m̄i is widely used as a nominalizer

na ‘this, that (anaphoric)’ – *nam̄i* ‘this, that’

It is also used as a part of the marker of the collective forms *-λ-m̄i m̄ɔ:t* ‘dwelling’ – *m̄ɔ:ti-λm̄i* ‘a group of dwellings’

According to (Janhunen 1977), *m̄i* was regarded as originated from the Proto-Uralic interrogative pronoun ‘what’, but quite recently another origin for *m̄i* was suggested by (Zhivlov 2022): PU ‘earth’, PS ‘thing, place’.

m̄i and its derivatives adjectival *m̄i-λ*, adverbial *m̄i-η_{2x}* and verbal *m̄i-qo* are used in a phrase substituting any noun, adjective, adverb or verb, typically in a situation where the speaker hesitates, not finding the appropriate word.

As a rule, the morphological marking of this placeholder reflects the marking of the target words

(1) na tʃʲaqa-min **mi-p** ta:ti-kk-ɔ:min **ɲasi-m**
this swamp-ELA PH-ACC bring-HAB-3PL moss-ACC
'(We) brought that thing, moss from this swamp' (FM 2013)

(2) aʃʲa kət-ɛnt-am man **mi-ʌ** tətta-ŋ
NEG say-FUT-1SG.OBJ 1SG.GEN PH-ADJ rich-ADVZ
ili-s-aŋ **tətta-ʌ** ili-ptæ-p tʃʲɛ:ŋk-a man
live-PST-1SG rich-ADJ live-NMLZ-POSS.1SG NEG.EX-3SG 1SG
'I won't say my whatchamacallit (I) lived richly, my life is not rich'
(FM 1998)

(3) ni:ni **mi-ŋ-a** karræ yti-ʌ-ʌæ **pakt-a**
then PH-EP-3SG down.to.river water-VBLZ-CVB run-3SG
'Then (he) has done that, (he) ran down to the river for water.'
(Kuznecova et al. 1993)

(4) muntɨŋ **mi-ŋ** **soma-ŋ** me:-s-atɨ
all PH-ADVZ good-ADVZ do-PST-3SG.OBJ
'(He) did all that way, well.' (FM 2013)

(5) mat si:tʃʲa-m **mi-qit** **nimti** ε:-j-a
1SG heart-POSS.1SG PH.LOC there EP-3SG
'My heart is somewhere there.' (FM 1996)

Placeholder mi as general extender

(6) **yr-sæ** **mi-sæ** tott-æ-l-p-atɪ i
fat-INST PH-INST put-PLOBJ-PSTN-3SG.OBJ and

on-tɪ ponæ satʃʲtʃʲi-mɔ:t-p-a
RFL-POSS.3SG outside jump.out-SEM.PFV-PSTN-3SG

‘He put fat and all that (onto the table) and jumped outdoors himself’ (Upper Taz 1972)’

(7) moqɪnæ-t lo:sɔ:ɔ-qɪ **totti-læ** **mi-læ** næntɪ aɬtʃʲi-mp-ɔ:qɪ

back-LOC devil-DU quarrel-CVB PH-CVB together fall.down-PSTN-DU
‘Behind, the (two) devils, quarreling and all that, fell down together’
(ProkArch 1925)

Other fillers

(8) tam mol **naenta** **mi** qæli-λ **naenta** myti **naenti**
this REP so.it.is PH Nenets-ADJ so.it.is war so.it.is
ty-s-ɔ:tɪn **naenta**
come-PST-3PL so.it.is

‘This, they say, so it is, what’s its name, Nenets, so it is, war
(Nenets warriors), so it is, came, so it is.’ (FM 1999)

(9) mat i tʃopa-i:-mi **neinti** təm **neina** **mi**
1SG.GEN and brother-PL-POSS.1SG so.it.is 3SG so.it.is PH
i:-ŋ-itɪ **neinta** **mi** **mi-m** **neinta**
take-EP-3SG.OBJ so.it.is PH PH-ACC so.it.is

‘And my brothers, so it is, so it is, well, he took, so it is, well,
them, so it is’ (FM 2002)

Code-switched / borrowed fillers

(10) Aliofka εj pat-as'pat-as'

Alexis, again climb.in-IMP.2SG.SBJ climb.in-IMP.2SG

jolki zilionyje

green.firtrees

me: qaji-n-εmæ *vitafji-m*

1PL what-GEN-INDEF take.out-PRS.1PL[R]

'Alexis, dive, dive again (into the den), green.firtrees, we'll take you out somehow'.

(11) *n'et* afj kik-a afj kika **nu=ladno**

NEG NEG want-3SG.SBJ NEG want-3SG.SBJ okay

'No, he does not want to, does not want to, okay' (FM 2003)

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Thank you!