

Placeholders versus general extenders in Tungusic languages

ALT

Fillers and placeholders

Elena Klyachko 16.12.2022

Placeholders...

(1) *həwəkiːhələ* *aŋi-l-duk* *sʲita-l-duk*
God INTJ PH-PL-ABL clay-PL-ABL

o-dʲa-fkiː *bi-sʲə* *bəjə-l-bə*
make-IPFV-PTCP be-PTCP person-PL-ACC

‘God made people **out of** *whatsitsname*, **out of clay**’ (Evenki)

(2) *ə-doː-tin* *aŋi-dʲə-rə*
NEG-CVPURP-3PL PH-IPFV-PTCP

isə-w-dʲə-rə=doː *loku-sa-dʲa-ra=daː*
see-PASS-IPFV-PTCP=FOC hang-STAT-IPFV-PTCP=FOC

‘So that they will not **be** *whatsitsname*, **be seen, hang**’ (Evenki)

and general extenders

(3) *muldiː-ka-r* *əɾəgərit* *eː-wa=da*
not.be.able-DIM-PL absolutely what-ACC=FOC

doku-d'a-miː=da

write-IPFV-CVB=FOC

eː-d'a-miː=da

what-IPFV-CVB=FOC

'They were not able to write anything or do anything' (Evenki)

(4) *uta-zi* *wa-i* *diga-i* *uta-zi* *diga-∅-li*
that-INS kill-PTCP eat-PTCP that-INS eat-PRS-3SG

uleː-we

meat-ACC

je-we

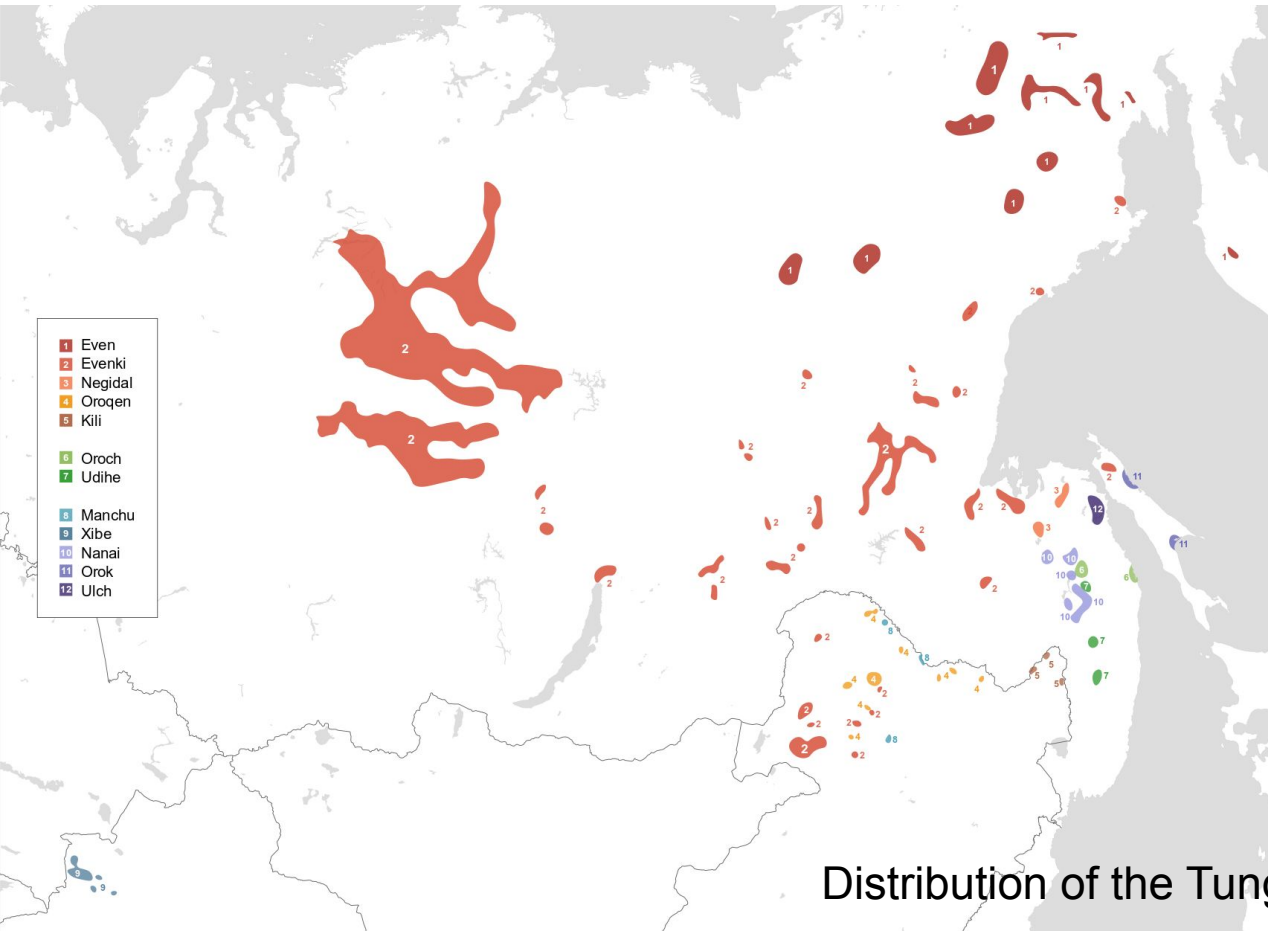
what-ACC

diga-i

eat-PTCP

'Then they eat what he has killed, they eat meat and the rest'
(Udihe)

Tungusic languages



Distribution of the Tungusic languages (Noaheditis) 4

General extenders (Overstreet 1999)

- words like “et cetera” in enumerations
- used for ad-hoc categorization (Mauri 2018)
- often exhibit “mirroring” – cf. placeholders!
- forms:
 - phrases like “and” + demonstratives + words like “thing”
 - pronouns
 - phrases like “let’s say”
 - reduplication
 - special morphemes
- can be found in written texts

(Tolskaya and Tolskaya 2008) comparing them to PH

Aims

Compare placeholders and general extenders
in Tungusic languages:

- etymology
- grammatical features
- functions

Problems

- the whole language family is endangered ⇒
 - frequent use of vague language due to attrition
- research based on corpora
 - “unnaturalness” of the texts
- difficult to invent an experimental setting
 - not always possible to study “mirroring”
- low prestige
 - absence of fillers in published texts
 - less attention from linguists

Tungusic languages

- **Jurchenic**

- †Jurchen
- Manchu
- Xibe

- **Nanaic**

- Nanai
- Ulch
- Uilta (Orok)

- **Orochic**

- Udihe
- †Oroch

- **Ewenic**

- Evenki
- Negidal
- Even
- Solon
- Oroqen

Tungusic placeholder stems

- *anji / anu* (Evenki dialects, Udihe, Oroch, Uilta)
- *uŋ(un)* (Evenki dialects, Even, Negidal)
 - *uŋun* vs *anji* in Evenki
- ‘*what*’-stem (Evenki dialects, Even, Nanai, Ulch, Sibe, Uilta, Udihe(?))
- demonstratives (Sibe, ?)



añi / anu

(5) *d'am-muː-l-mi* *añi-ŋna-ka1* *guː-səː*
eat-DES-INCH-CVB PH-HAB-IMPER.2SG say-PTCP

əri-ŋ-mə-w *tugeː* *siwu-ŋna-ka1*
this-ALIEN-ACC-POSS.1SG so lick-HAB-IMPER.2SG

'If you are hungry, do so, he said, **lick** this [your paw]'

(**Evenki**)

(6) *aja* *ñaŋga=da* *ñaŋga* *añi-nde-ze-m(i)* *sin-e-we*
good little=FOC little PH-SEM-SUBJ-1SG 2SG-EP-ACC

[kesu-li-nde-ze-m(i)]

torture-INCH-SEM-SUBJ-1SG

'Ok, let me **do this**, torture you a little'

(**Udihe**, Nikolaeva & Tolskaya 2001)

an̄i / anu

(7) čo:tč̄i tar ʃof̄or nari anu ba:ru-ni
then that driver man PH side-POSS.3SG

val ba:ru-ni zvoni-ri-ni val gasa-tai-ni
Val side-POSS.3SG phone-PRS-3SG Val village-ALL-POSS.3SG
'Then that driver phoned **in this direction**, in the direction of Val, to the village of Val' (**Uilta**, (corpus))

(8) tojo:=t̄fi mapact̄fa: an̄i-wa an̄i-xa-ni loo-xo-ni
then=FOC old.man PH-ACC PH-PST-3SG hang-PST-3SG
'Then the old man **did whatsitsname**, hanged <fish to dry it>'
(**Oroch**, (Kazama 1996))

uŋ(un)

(9) *t'ijiw* *bi* *bəri-ri-w* *uŋ-u* *halka-w*
yesterday 1SG lose-NFUT-1SG PH-ACC hammer-ACC

'Yesterday, I lost whatchamacallit, the hammer' (**Even**)

(10) *tos* *a:tin* *bi-ta-n* *o-ta-s* *uŋun-a* *tosta-ja*
salt NEG be-PST-3SG NEG-FUT-2SG PH-CVB salt-CVB

'There was no salt, <so> you won't do this, salt' (**Negidal**)

(11) *bəjə* *uŋun-mə* *dəwit-pa* *ha:-∅-ndə*
man PH-ACC David-ACC know-NFUT-2SG

'Friend, do you know **whatshisname**, David' (**Evenki**)

'what'-stem

(12) *na:n motor-wa xaj-ri-ni motor ηən-i-wə-n*
3SG motor-ACC **what-PRS-3SG** motor.boat go-PTCP-ACC-3SG

ətəw-ri-ni

watch-PRS-3SG

'He **does this**, watches the boat go' (**Ulch**)

(13) *ahatkan ia-w=kana hiarəŋ-u gari-dzi hokok-ra-n*
girl **what-ACC=CONTR** branch-ACC take-CVB break-NFUT-3sg

'The girl took **whatsitsname**, a branch' (**Even**) [Matić])

Tungusic general extender stems

- 'what'-stem
- demonstratives (Sibe)

Tungusic placeholders: functions

- the speaker cannot:
 - recall the target word
 - pronounce it due to some extra-linguistic reasons
- the speaker wants
 - to switch to a new topic
 - to draw attention to the target word
 - for the listener to help them recall it
 - the target word is somewhat “out of order”, like borrowed names in Sibe

Tungusic general extenders: functions

- the speaker does not want to describe the whole possible set of objects or actions
- the speaker is not sure if they have chosen the right word

(14) *küxoxi=tene läsi uligdiga tfinda xai*

oriole=FOC very beautiful bird also

dili-le-ni *ogo-xi* *iʔ-xi*

head-LOC-POSS.3SG crest-ADJ what-ADJ

‘Oriole is a very beautiful bird with a crest or something like that on its head’ (**Udihe**)

- alternative questions:

(15) *guli-zeŋe-fi=es*

leave-FUT-1PL.IN=DIS

ja-zaŋa-fi=es?

what-FUT-1PL.IN=DIS

‘Shall we leave or not’ (**Udihe** [Tolskaya & Tolskaya 2008])

Tungusic placeholders: mirroring

- nominal target words:
 - number
 - case
 - possession
 - frequent derivational markers
 - equative, caritive, diminutive markers
- verb target words:
 - person
 - number
 - TAM
 - frequent derivational markers (“Aktionsart”)

BUT not voice markers

Tungusic general extenders: mirroring

- all markers, including voice

(16) *ə-wkiː* *minə* ***eː-ra*** *əyi-fkoːn-ə*
NEG-PTCP 1SG.ACC **what-PTCP** play-CAUS-PTCP
'She did not let me do this, let me play' (**Evenki**)

(17) *toyo-wo* *oːkin=daː* *eː-wkoː* *əru-t*
fire-ACC when=FOC NEG-PTCP bad-ADVZ
janu-w-rə *ə-wkoː* ***eː-w-ra=daː***
talk-PASS-PTCP NEG-PTCP **what-PASS-PTCP=FOC**
'One should not talk to fire badly or do similar things'
(**Evenki**)

Placeholders

General extenders

ways to express

a variety of stems

mainly 'what'-stem

etymology

unclear

clear

mirroring

not full

full

(usually no voice or most
derivational affixes)

Hypothesis

- *anji* / *unjun* are original placeholder stems
- ‘what’:
 - general extender → placeholder

Hypothesis: pros

- generally similar functions
- (Ganenkov et al 2010):
 - Udi: pronoun → placeholder → general extender (similative plural constructions)
- *aŋi / uŋun*:
 - unclear etymology
 - found in different branches of the family
- Negidal:
 - several cases of ‘what’ as a placeholder

(18) *taj* *hujan* *e:kun-du-n*
that forest what-DAT-POSS.3SG

səβəkɪ-du-n *təje-∅-s* *ti:*
spirit-DAT-POSS.3SG treat-NFUT-2SG so

‘In that forest you treat whatshisname, spirit so’

References

*Sibe

(Zikmundova 2013), (Kogura 2021), (Kogura 2022))

- <http://nanai.web-corpora.net>, (Kazama 2007); texts ((Avrorin 1986), (Kazama 1993)
- (<http://ulch.web-corpora.net>
- (uilta.web-corpora.net; field materials, texts ((Ikegami 2002), (Yamada 2011, 2015, 2017)))
- (Nikolaeva and Tolskaya 2001, Tolskaya and Tolskaya 2008), texts (Schneider 1936)
- texts (Kazama 1996)
- ield materials, <https://gisly.net>, <https://corpora.iea.ras.ru/corpora>
- Pakendorf & Aralova 2017
- Matic 2008), texts ((Nikolaeva et al. 2019)