# Variation in argument encoding under asymmetric language contact: Evidence from Southern Tungusic and the variety of Russian used by their speakers

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Argument structure is a convenient field for studying grammatical outcomes of language contact and shift. This paper deals with variation in argument encoding in the speech of the Nanai and Ulcha (Southern Tungusic, the Amur region).

Both Nanai and Ulcha are highly endangered. They are no longer transmitted to children, all speakers are fluent in Russian.

Non-standard argument encoding is attested both in the modern Nanai and Ulcha and in the Russian variety used by their speakers. I will analyze and compare these two cases. The following questions will be discussed:

→ Do non-standard valency patterns always copy Russian/Tungusic ones or are other processes at play: language attrition (in Tungusic), incomplete acquisition (in Russian), language-inherent variation? Not all changes attested in contact settings are contact-induced (Poplack & Levey 2010). This is also the case for our data.

→ How are they distributed across speakers? The expectation is that Russian-like valency patterns are more likely in the Nanai/Ulcha speech of (younger) speakers with dominant Russian, while Tungusic-like patterns are more likely in the Russian speech of those with dominant Nanai/Ulcha ("source-language agentivity", Winford 2005). Our data follow this trend, although with deviations.

→ Are valency patterns exhibiting variation the same in contact-influenced Russian and in contact-influenced Tungusic? A partial overlap takes place.

The study is based on our field data: 1) texts in Nanai and Ulcha (102,817 tokens); 2) texts in Russian produced by the same speech community (54,318 tokens).

**References:** • Poplack, Sh., and S. Levey. 2010. Contact-induced grammatical change: a cautionary tale. In: Auer, P. & J. Schmidt. *Language and Space: An International Handbook of Linguistic Variation*. Vol. I. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 391–419. • Winford, D. (2005). Contact-induced changes: Classification and processes. *Diachronica* 22(2), 373–427.