
In search of contact-induced patterns in the Russian speech of the Evenki: Analyzing fieldnotes from the 1910s

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This paper attempts to reconstruct a contact-influenced variety of Russian used by bilingual speakers of Evenki (Tungusic) in the early 20th c. Our data come from manuscripts by Konstantin Rychkov (1910s). They contain texts in several Evenki dialects with parallel translation into Russian, made by Rychkov with the assistance of his bilingual Evenki consultants. The language of this translation differs from Standard Russian, showing structural similarities with Evenki. Their nature is unclear; two scenarios are probable:

a) Rychkov tried to create a literal translation of the Evenki text (not reflecting any specific variety of Russian).

b) Rychkov consistently recorded contact-influenced Russian speech of his Evenki consultants.

Some features attested in Rychkov's translations are characteristic of monolinguals' Russian dialects, including features which vary across texts collected in different locations. This suggests reflecting natural local speech to some degree. However, there is also evidence for word-by-word translating.

We focus on several peculiarities of Rychkov's Russian, including nonstandard word-order, valency, and polysemy patterns.

Analyzing their possible motivations, we rely mainly on the correspondence between Russian translations and their Evenki sources.

For instance, an expansion of the nonstandard word order pattern GEN+N, typical of Evenki, seems to be an artifact of word-by-word translation, because the word order in the NP follows Evenki consistently.

In contrast, the nonstandard argument structure of the verb *dostič'* 'to reach' is not a result of a literal translation, because the Evenki-like valency pattern in Russian translation is attested not exactly in those places as in the Evenki text.

References: • Rychkov (Rakaj) Konstantin Mixajlovich (1882-1923), ethnographer, linguist. *The Archives of the Orientalists of IOM RAS*, Coll. 49, inv. 1, items 4, 5, 6a, b, v, http://www.orientalstudies.ru/rus/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=10326&Itemid=149