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## Some Features of the Language of Verkhnekolymsky Evens

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*The paper attempts to identify some of the features of the language of the Verkhnekolymsky Even people, which have not been previously described in the scientific publications. Verkhnekolymsky sub-dialect demonstrates along with the typical for western sub-dialects differences some peculiar grammatical features that are not typical for other Even dialects. This fact should be taken into account when this sub-dialect is attributed to certain dialects.*

*Keywords:* the Even language, dialects and sub-dialects, Verkhnekolymsky subdialect, features.

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Verkhnekolymsky sub-dialect is spoken by the Evens living in Verkhnekolymsky District of Yakutia. In existing classifications this linguistic formation was first distinguished as individual one only in 2004 by A.A. Burykin, who gave it the name "Verkhnekolymsky dialect" (Burykin: 76). Verkhnekolymsky District has still not been thoroughly examined by Even studies researchers, specialists in dialectology. Verkhnekolymsky sub-dialect is not observed in the Even language studies and no publication has referred to any texts and samples of everyday speech, or has contained at least the materials in the form of illustrative examples, characteristic for Verkhnekolymsky sub-dialect.

In March 2014 the author participated in the expedition of the Institute of Humanities Research and Indigenous Studies of the North

SB RAS (Yakutsk) and was able to work in Verkhnekolymsky ulus of the Sakha Republic (Yakutia). The main purpose of the expedition was to collect materials of Verkhnekolymsky sub-dialect of the Even language, and, if it was possible, to record the Even folklore, typical of this region of Yakutia.

During the expedition there were recorded samples of everyday speech, dialogue, narrative texts; there were made records of lexical items and phrasal examples with them; there was clarified the meaning of individual word forms. Unfortunately, it turned out not possible to fix the folklore materials.

The informants, with whom the expedition worked, were old and elderly people: the youngest of the native language speakers was over 60 years old, the oldest – was about 80. The young

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Evens do not speak and are not able to speak and understand their mother tongue.

Total 4715 people live in Verkhnekolymsky District, the number of the Even people there is 72 (1.5 % of the total population). According to our informants, in Verkhnekolymsky District the Even language is spoken only by about 10 people (13.8 %). The Even language as a subject is taught in 2 schools, where 23 pupils study the Even language.

During the sampling survey conducted in March 2014, the author revealed the following results. The main language used by the respondents for communication was the Yakut language. However, the majority of respondents stressed out that in their preschool years the Even language also was their language of communication. The participants evaluate the degree of their Even language skills ambiguously, pointing out the absence of language environment, lack of knowledge of folklore and so on. Thus, Verkhnekolymsky sub-dialect belongs from a sociolinguistic point to one of the most disadvantaged dialects of the Even language. Therefore, the documentation of its materials is strikingly important for linguistic sciences. The results of the work with the informants, Verkhnekolymsky District residents, allow making conclusions about the main characteristic features of Verkhnekolymsky sub-dialect.

The main phonetic features of Verkhnekolymsky sub-dialect include the following peculiarities:

1) There were spotted partly spirant sounds, a lack of such a sound-type as [c] and a presence of pharyngeal consonant [h] in some words: *yhu* "rope", *бүнүмэн* "are situated", *энэм утулда* "I don't understand". However, the speech of informants revealed also the contrary fact, the middle and the end parts of some words save the sound-type [c]: *acu* "a woman", *бүсән* "is situated",

*көсчиðэй* "to pasture deer", *далси* "tasty", *авса* "a bag", *hac* "you know". The Western sub-dialects demonstrate the full spirant character in all positions of the pharyngeal consonant [h].

2) There was recorded a very interesting final metathesis of -c and a vowel in a last syllable: *боксэ* "ice", *эксэ* "fish scales" (the Eastern sub-dialects have correspondingly: *бөкэс*, *экэс*, the Western: *бөхкэ*, *эхкэ*). This option was not found in other dialects and sub-dialects.

3) As typical of all Western dialects, there was noted the coronal sound [d] after sonorant consonants: *үлдэ* (in Eastern sub-dialects – *үлрэ*) "meat", *нанда* (in Eastern sub-dialects – *нанра*) "animal skin".

4) The described dialect, as other sub-dialects of Yakutia Evens, exhibits a very bright reduction ("ы" pronunciation) of vowels [a], [ɛ]. According to our data, in Verkhnekolymsky sub-dialect the reduced vowels [ă] and [ĕ] are characterized by the fact that the vowel [ă] has a more frontal articulation than the back [a], i.e. leading factor here is the position of the tongue in the back or in the front:

Verkhnekolymsky Literary	Meaning
<i>амän</i>	амън
<i>сиркäддäн</i>	сиркаддън
<i>тарақäm</i>	таракъм

The vowel [ă] as pronounced in Verkhnekolymsky sub-dialect sounds in all positions as ы mixed vowel.

Verkhnekolymsky Literary	Meaning
<i>ěмेp</i>	эмър
<i>ěрёгेp</i>	эрэгър
<i>бेpгे</i>	бэргъ

5) The sub-dialect shows coming out (syncope) and falling (apocope) short vowels in non-initial syllables. This is due to the formation of simple and compound words such as: *оран* "a deer" – *орицич* "from a deer", *муран* "a horse" – *мурцич* "from a horse", *тэми* "a coat" – *тэйттэй* "to put on a coat". The apocope is observed in the

formation of compound words: *эррөчин* "yonder" from *эр* "this" + *урэчин* "similar").

In the morphological area this sub-dialect is also characterized by certain features.

The most remarkable morphological peculiarity is the only one form of the first person plural *мут* "we" (so this is in all Western sub-dialects).

The next peculiarity is the absence of separate forms of possessive pronouns of the first and second persons, instead of which the personal pronouns are used, as in the example: *Би абагабу аманни, энинни иланмэр оралкан нулгыбатти эбэн бэилни бичэл.* "A father, a mother of my grandfather were nomadic Evens with thirty deer". *хи гяс нёка гү?* "Is your husband a Yakut?"

The plural forms of the word stem types *оран*, *муран* are co-accompanied by truncation of the final [H] in the stem: *ора-л* "deer", *мура-л* "horses".

In the sub-dialect allative-locative case and allative-prosecutive cases are uncommon, instead of them postposition constructions are used: *Оралчимцал окам холилин нулгуччэл.* "Once deer herders roamed along the river bank".

Typical of some Western sub-dialects metathesis for possessive forms of the second and third person plural *-хын~хнын*, *-тын~тнын* were not found in this sub-dialect.

This sub-dialect presents both determinative forms *бэйди* and *мэнкэн* "myself, ourselves", displaying personal excluding meaning, indicating a direct participation in the action of the speaker. However, in the speech of the informants the first form was the most often, for example: *Би бэйди нацанаддам.* "I saw myself". *Би бэйди мэлэ хэдэвэрэм.* "I just sing хэдэ myself".

Verkhnekolymsky sub-dialect there was detected a model of the second ten numerals containing postposition *ойдун* "over". The model is constructed as follows: *мян ойдун өмэн*

"eleven" (literally "ten, over one"); *мян ойдун дöр* "twelve" (literally "ten, over two"); *мян ойдун илан* "thirteen" (literally "ten, over three"), etc. This method of forming the second ten numerals is characteristic of the dialects in Indigirka River Basin (Western dialects).

The sub-dialect registers augmentative and diminutive forms of collective numerals, which are used for additional estimation of the objects being counted: *илничэмэн* "all three", *илниндевэн* "whole three", *дыгничэмэн* "all four", *дыгниндевэн* "whole four" and so on and so forth. Distributive numerals together with conventional forms as *илатал* "in three, by three", *дыгэтэл* "in four, by four" have additional forms of *илаталди*, *дыгэтэлди*.

The second person singular verbs of present and future tenses in the Even language have a personal suffix *-нри*, in Verkhnekolymsky sub-dialect this personal suffix has the form of *-нни*, for example: *оцанни* "you will become", *бисинни* "you are".

In this dialect the second person plural verbs of present and future tenses are formed by means of a personal suffix *-с*, for example: *ха-с* "you know", *хөр-ди-с* "you will leave", whereas in Western sub-dialects instead of [c] sound type the pharyngeal consonant [h] is used.

In Verkhnekolymsky sub-dialect the verb has the following features. In this sub-dialect the predominant expression of the past tense is in the forms of the past participle with the suffix *-ча-/чэ-* and personal possessive suffixes, at the same time the forms of the third person singular and plural have no personal indicators and plural forms have the suffix of number *-л*, as in the example: *эмчэс* "you (sg) came", *эмчэлсэн* "you (pl) came", *эмчэ* "he came", *эмчэл* "they came". In the informants' speech there were also such forms of the past tense, ending on *-ри*: *улэлери* "I worked", *мударакри* "I finished", *эмритэн* "they arrived".

The present tense third person singular from the word stems ending with the vowel makes a form *бөн* "gives" (in Eastern dialects *бөрэн*), the past tense – *бөчэ* "gave".

In the second person singular forms of the first imperative mood of the verb with the final consonant -*н* the consonant of the word stem is omitted, as in the example: *гө-ли* "tell", cf. *и-ли* "enter". Verkhnekolymsky sub-dialect has the first person plural forms of the first imperative mood of the verb with the suffix *-галда/-гэлдэ*, e.g.: *хэдегэлдэ* "let's dance хэдэ", *некэлдэ* "let's do". The second person plural forms of the first imperative mood of the verb have two parallel variations *-лда/-лдэ* and *-лилда/-лилдэ*, e.g., *гөлдэ* and *гөлилдэ* "tell!". Despite this, two given variations do not have any semantic difference.

The mediopassive voice forms, which are formed from the verb by adding the suffix *-б-//-**n*, e.g., *бэридэй* "to lose" – *бэриптэй* "to get lost", *бактай* "to find" – *бакаптай* "to be found", *эмэндэй* "to leave" – *эмэнтэй* "to be left" are used more actively than the similar forms in Eastern dialects, besides the mediopassive voice forms are presented not only in the personal forms of verbs, but also in participle and adverbial forms.

Among the forms of duration/repetition of action in the dialect active the forms *-гра/-гра-//-**гара-/-гэрэ-//-**ица-/-цэ-* are particularly common: *укчэндэй* "to tell once" – *укчэнгэрэдэй* "to tell repeatedly", *хэдедэй* "to dance once" – *хэденгэрэдэй* "to dance repeatedly". The examples are: *Хэйэк улдэвэн эстэ дебгэрэр.* "Bear meat is not eaten". *Чукачан икэмутэн долчими, би hoch – hoch орэңчигрэрэм.* "Listening to bird singing, I admire very very much".

Verkhnekolymsky sub-dialect, unlike other Western dialects has rather frequent forms expressing conventional action and ending with *-вам/-вэм*: *нююмариваттам* "I am (usually) ashamed of", *төрэвээмтэ* "they (usually) say".

Verkhnekolymsky sub-dialect has the form *-йам/-йэм*, close in its meaning to the suffix of the usual form *-вам/-вэм*, but expressing some kind of emotion, showing sympathy for the subject of the performed action. This form was not observed in the grammatical descriptions and special studies, but according to our observations, it is found in the sub-dialects of both Eastern and Western dialects (Sharina: 66). Let's draw an example: *Энэе, ай бэй оцанни гоникэн ниргэчэл, гудеил, тарим нөрйатчал.* "You will be a rich, good man, saying, they wished some blessings, poor, then left".

Verkhnekolymsky sub-dialect has also rather frequent form of simultaneous adverbial with the suffix *-никан/-никэн*. In the sub-dialect this adverbial does not tend to distinguish between the forms of number, functioning in the singular form in the status of uninflected adverbials. The reason for this phenomenon is not completely clear, but we can assume that it may be due to the influence of the Yakut language, for example: *Үйбаан эньми нямичаман туут нэпкэниди, бөчэ.* "Ivan (lured) caught mother-deer with salt, and gave". *Анипчал улдэнүүр инникан нөрдэвүр бэлэмнэччэл.* "(Their) presented meat, leaving, prepared to wear on the back".

Moreover, Verkhnekolymsky sub-dialect has form of simultaneous different subject adverbial with the suffix *-цси-*, e.g.: *Күңца бицсиву эвэдымт төрэгэрив.* "When I was a child, I spoke Even". *Дялбүй биницситэн нулгэнинцсум.* "When the parents were alive, they roamed".

Verkhnekolymsky sub-dialect does not trace the participle of (passé immédiat) past tense with the suffix *-мам/-мэт* and the participle of the past perfect tense with the suffix *-мла/-млэ*.

Any particular features of adverbs as parts of speech are not discernible in this sub-dialect.

Verkhnekolymsky sub-dialect does not contain dialectisms in its lexicon, found in far-Western dialects, however, the speech of some

informants had the word *нолима* "sled". There were also used words that are not marked in dictionaries, for example: *дянтан* "burns". In addition, Verkhnekolymsky sub-dialect has quite many borrowings from the Yakut language.

Thus, judging by the sources of the material one can notice that Verkhnekolymsky sub-dialect of the Even language shows some differences from those linguistic formations, which are known in

the literature as Eastern and Western dialects. The above mentioned differences and peculiarities are as if between Eastern and Western dialects, and must be taken into account when this sub-dialect is attributed to the linguistic formation under the name "the middle sub-dialect". Further research here can give new, more comprehensive and reliable data, not only in relation to the sub-dialect spread, but also for the existing classification.

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## Некоторые особенности языка верхнеколымских эвенов

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*В статье предпринята попытка выявления некоторых особенностей языка верхнеколымских эвенов, которые не были отмечены ранее в публикациях исследователей. Наряду с характерными для говоров западного наречия отличиями при детальном рассмотрении обнаруживаются и грамматические особенности, нетипичные для других эвенских диалектов, что должно быть учтено при отнесении данного говора к определенным наречиям.*

*Ключевые слова:* эвенский язык, диалекты и говоры, верхнеколымский говор, особенности.

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