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**Izhma Komi in Western Siberia: at the crossroads of language contact  
(Running head: Izhma Komi in Western Siberia)<sup>1</sup>**

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Abstract: This paper considers contact-induced change in Izhma Komi subdialects spoken in Western Siberia. We focus on the interaction of Izhma Komi, first, with Russian and, second, with the indigenous Siberian languages (Nenets and to a lesser extent Khanty). The main emphasis is on the phenomena of pattern borrowing at various language levels, which mostly remained beyond previous studies. For instance, these are borrowing of some phonotactic patterns, copying polysemy patterns, and changes in the properties of some grammatical constructions. We discuss how in each case the degree of contact-induced change depends on the sociolinguistic situation.

Key words: Uralic languages, Izhma Komi, Nenets, Khanty, Russian, contact-induced change, loan translation.

**1. Introduction**

Our study focuses on contact-induced change in Izhma Komi subdialects spoken in the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous District (Western Siberia, Russia). This area is multilingual. It is inhabited by native speakers of two Samoyedic languages – Nenets (the northern part) and Selkup (the eastern part) – as well as by speakers of Khanty (Finno-Ugric) in the western and north-western parts. In addition, there are Izhma Komi speakers who migrated from the European territory of Russia. They live primarily in the western part (along the river Ob and some of its tributaries), and to a lesser extent in the north-eastern part of the Yamal-Nenets district. As follows from Žerebcov (1982) and Povod (2006), it is generally acknowledged that the main migration wave dates back to the first half of the 19th century. In the new linguistic and cultural environment that resulted from this migration, Izhma Komi speakers entered into mixed marriages and worked in mixed reindeer-herding communities,

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thus learning Nenets and Khanty. Nowadays, however, the outcome of this contact situation is obscured by the intensive influence of the Russian language (and its status as the lingua franca and the most prestigious language in the region), as well as by the widespread loss of the native language by the younger generations. Nevertheless, some of these outcomes of earlier

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contact are still observable, especially in the areas in which mixed families and reindeer-herding communities are common, where Izhma Komi continue using the indigenous languages of this territory, primarily Nenets.

In this article we discuss the case of contact-induced change undergone by Izhma Komi in Western Siberia (focusing on the subdialects spoken in the Yamal-Nenets district). This issue has been raised in previous research (e.g. Žilina & Kolegova, 1960; Sorvačeva, 1960; Igušev, 1976; Saxarova & Sel'kov, 1976; Turkin, 1985). These papers mainly discuss borrowing cultural lexicon. A classic example is reindeer herding which was adopted by the Izhma Komi from the Nenets people. As a result, many Nenets terms were borrowed into Komi, cf. the following examples from (Saxarova & Sel'kov, 1976, p. 122–123): *xora* ‘deer-male’ (Nenets *xora*<sup>2</sup>); *synzy* ‘vertical poles on two sides of the fire, where cross strings are attached to suspend the hooks’ (Nenets *simzi*, *syimzi*); and *vand'ej* ‘sledge for personal belongings and food’ (Nenets *wantako*, *wantad*).

Our work, in turn, mainly focuses on the problems that do not fit into the “basic” prototype of lexical borrowing and involve pattern borrowing in phonology, grammar, and lexicon. This issue has not been elaborated to date in the studies of the area under consideration here, although Leinonen (2006, 2009) presents some exceptions: see a more detailed discussion in Section 3. We consider the interaction of Izhma Komi with Nenets, Khanty, and Russian.

The data for this article was collected during fieldwork from 2008 to 2017 in several villages<sup>3</sup>. To a great extent they come from the western and the north-western parts of the district including Shuryshkary region (the villages of Muzhi, Shuryshkary, Vosyakhovo, Ovgort) and Priuralsk region (the village of Beloyarsk). In the Shuryshkary region, Izhma Komi is in contact with Khanty, in the Priuralsk region – primarily with Nenets. Contact with Khanty is more

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<sup>2</sup> The examples from Komi and Khanty are given in the Finno-Ugric (phonological) transcription based on the Latin alphabet. The transcription of Nenets examples relies on (Salminen 1998), with the only exception of the symbol «<sup>o</sup>» omitted in this paper, since it has a morphonological rather than a phonological status, which is not relevant for our discussion.

<sup>3</sup> Apart from the authors, there were more people who took part in these field trips and helped us to collect the primary data: V. D'jachkov, A. Evstigneeva, A. Kozlov, M. Kudrinskij, A. Murav'eva, S. Nikiforova, E. Pavlova, P. Plešak, M. Privizenceva, E. Renkovskaja, M. Šapiro, M. Sidorova, I. Stenin, A. Zakirova. Some data come from the field trips of Moscow State University lead by A. Kuznecova and S. Toldova.

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active in the southern part of the Priuralsk district (the villages of Aksarka and Katravozh), while in the area surrounding Beloyarsk the Khanty people are very few and have no significant influence. We also have field data from the Pur region (the village of Samburg), where the Izhma Komi population came under a strong Nenets influence. In each field trip we worked with 10-20 Izhma Komi speakers depending on the village. We collected wordlists which embrace all the major lexical domains (kinship terms; terms for animals and plants; artifacts of everyday use in different spheres including reindeer herding; quality concepts referring to color, size, temperature etc.; verbs of motion, cutting & breaking, sounds, for example). The wordlists collected in each village include approximately 2000-3000 entries illustrated by the examples of their use. They were mainly elicited from Russian stimuli; sometimes we also asked our consultants to clarify the meaning of a particular Izhma Komi word. The size of each wordlist depended on our time restrictions and on the other tasks for a particular field trip, as well as on the language skills of our consultants. For example, in Shuryshkary and in Ovgort it was difficult to gather much data on the reindeer herding terminology, since we did not manage to find Izhma Komi speakers in these villages who were proficient enough in this activity. Oral narratives were recorded and transcribed in each village as well. In those cases where we suspected a possible contact-induced change, the phenomenon in question was checked with Nenets and/or Khanty speakers from the same village (in addition to consulting the relevant dictionaries and other published sources).

In addition, some data are available from the Nadym region (the village of Nori) thanks to a field trip organized by the Institute of Philology (Siberian Branch of Russian Academy of Sciences) which was primarily devoted to Nenets, but also managed to collect some Izhma Komi data for us.

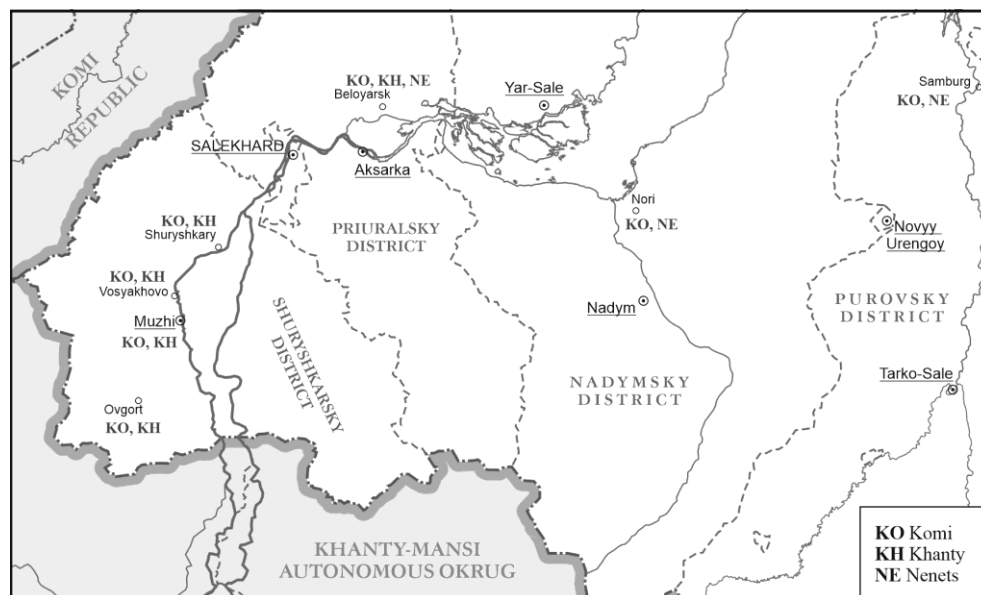
Our field data on Izhma Komi, as well as the data on the other languages from this area collected by our colleagues, is partly summarized in Koškareva et al. (2017) and is stored in an online database<sup>4</sup> (much data are still to be added). The villages where fieldwork was carried out and the languages spoken there are marked on the map in Figure 1<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://atlas.philology.nsc.ru/>

<sup>5</sup> We are grateful to Yu. Koryakov for his technical assistance with creating this map.

Figure 1 (on P. 122). The languages and the villages under consideration.



In addition to the field data, we take into account archival materials, primarily covering the subdialects of the Shuryshkary and Priuralsk region and, to a lesser extent, the Samburg subdialect. These are records from the Archive of the Komi Scientific Center of the UrB RAS (Žilina, 1959; Kolegova, 1959; Sorvačeva, 1959) and text collections of the 1990s and 2000s from the archive of the TV and radio company Yamal-Region located in Salekhard.

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When discussing cases of borrowing (especially those of pattern borrowing), one should, first, distinguish them from occurrences of independent semantic development, and, second, draw a line between a systemic transfer and occasional changes in some idiolects. In our research we adopt the following methodological principles.

First, we consider sociolinguistic prerequisites for various levels of borrowing – both for a local subdialect in general and for a particular speaker. Pattern borrowing is more likely to occur in rather dense contact situations – consider e.g. the “Borrowing scale” suggested by Thomason (2001, p. 70–71) arguing that pattern borrowing usually corresponds to more widespread bilingualism, more active social and cultural interaction, etc. Thus, for instance, pattern borrowing from Nenets into Izhma Komi in Samburg is

more expected than a loan translation from Khanty in Muzhi, as many speakers of the Samburg subdialect use Nenets in their families or in reindeer-herding communities, while most speakers of the Muzhi subdialect do not use Khanty (at least in the recent decades) and mostly do not know it, Russian being their default intermediate language with other ethnic groups. It should be borne in mind, however, that some contact-induced phenomena could remain from earlier historical periods, if the degree of bilingualism at that time was larger.

Second, we take into account what properties a phenomenon in question has in the dialects of Komi and Nenets / Khanty outside the area of language contact. The phenomena of pattern borrowing are expected to be specific for a recipient language in the contact zone and at the same time to be attested in a donor language outside the contact zone. Thus, for instance, if a polysemy pattern occurs

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in Komi only in the subdialect of Samburg and is typical of many regional varieties of Nenets, it can be more reliably evaluated as a loan translation from Nenets into Komi than a polysemy pattern widely occurring in Komi dialects outside the Nenets area. Therefore we compare our field data with published sources on Komi; for the lexicon there are dictionaries such as Lytkin (1961); Sorvačeva (1961); and Beznosikova (2012; 2014).

Third, it should be kept in mind that any structural parallelism between Komi and Nenets / Khanty can be attributed not only to pattern borrowing, but to the independent development of the same pattern or to the maintenance of some proto-language structure. Strictly speaking, one cannot prove the fact of calquing without reliable diachronic data from different periods supplemented by sociolinguistic evidence. The analysis of areal parallels and of their sociolinguistic correlations could be valuable in itself for cross-linguistic studies, as well as for highlighting those cases in which a contact situation could favor the maintenance of a proto-language polysemy pattern or the emergence of a typologically frequent pattern.

Fourth, since we discuss endangered dialects for which it is difficult to find many fluent speakers and to provide any kind of large-scale statistics, we provide data both on regular language changes and examples occurring in the speech of individual consultants (making sure that the latter are not just occasional slips of the tongue, but represent patterns independently attested in several idiolects). The latter kind of examples is by no means less valuable than the former, as every language change is considered to begin at the level of the individual speaker using a particular utterance, see e.g. Mat-

ras & Sakel (2007, pp. 847-848). In our discussion of each case we outline how widespread it is.

The article is structured as follows. Section 2 introduces the areal and sociolinguistic setting for the analyzed phenomena. Section 3 discusses the contact influence of Russian on Izhma Komi followed by section 4 covering Nenets and Khanty influences. Section 5 summarizes and discusses the results of the study.

## **2. Sociolinguistic situation**

The sociolinguistic situation of Standard Komi has been described in numerous papers, see, among others, Smetanin (2004); Punegova (2008, p. 11–20); and Mixal'čenko (2016, p. 214–218, 738–743). Komi is the official language of the Komi Republic (along with Russian). It is preserved in the older generations and often transmitted to children (especially in rural areas), while at the same time falling under the influence of Russian language and culture (see Leinonen (2006, 2009) and references therein). The situation with Izhma Komi (in the Komi Republic)

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is similar, and sometimes it is reported to be preserved even better (Leinonen, 2009, p. 313). At the same time it presents a particular case because of the heterogenous network of contact situations it is involved in, consider e.g. Saxarova & Sel'kov (1976); Leinonen (2009). Similarly to the Komi language in general, Izhma Komi is in a long-lasting contact with Russian. The degree of this contact was claimed to be even greater than in the case of Standard Komi (Leinonen, 2009, p. 309). Sometimes it has more observable results; see a long list of Russian lexical borrowings specific for Izhma Komi in Saxarova & Sel'kov (1976, p. 118–121). At the same time Izhma Komi has a long history of contact interaction with Nenets in the North of the European part of Russia (Žerebcov 1982, p. 157–175), which continued in Western Siberia after some groups of Izhma Komi migrated there. The interaction between Izhma Komi and Khanty started in the ancient times (according to different points of view, from 10<sup>th</sup> till 13<sup>th</sup> centuries) and became stable after the migration just mentioned (Žerebcov, 1982, p. 176–194). Some groups of Izhma Komi speakers migrated to the Kola Peninsula, where they started to interact with Saami speakers (Blokland & Rießler, 2011).

Izhma Komi in the Yamal-Nenets district is an endangered dialect. The 2010 population census indicates that the number of the Izhma Komi population in this region was 5000 people, of whom about 2000 actually spoke their mother tongue (Vserossijskaja perepis' naselenija 2010). Ac-

According to our field data, most speakers are older than 60 years old, some exceptions occur in reindeer-herding communities and in families with very elderly members preferring to communicate in Izhma Komi. The absolute majority of children and young people do not speak (and do not even understand) Izhma Komi.

The sociolinguistic situation is not the same in different groups of Izhma Komi living in the Yamal-Nenets district. The main divergence takes place in the village of Samburg (Purovsky district in the North-East of the region) in comparison to the villages from the Western Part of the region (Muzhi, Vosyakhovo, Shuryshkary, Ovgort, Beloyarsk)<sup>6</sup>.

First, in Samburg the dominant language in mixed families can be either Russian or Nenets. In the Western part, according to our data, the members of mixed families tend to communicate in Russian, but not in Khanty or Nenets (including Ovgort where a small group of Izhma Komi is dominated by Khanty).

Second, in the village of Samburg and in the Samburg Tundra there exist mixed Nenets-Komi reindeer-herding communities where the dominant language is Nenets.

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In Muzhi, Vosyakhovo, Shuryshkary, and Ovgort there are no Izhma Komi reindeer herders, as this activity is maintained only by Khanty people in that region. In Beloyarsk there are only a few Izhma Komi speakers involved in reindeer herding now and, at the same time, there is a large community of elderly people speaking in Izhma Komi in the village itself, which lessens the role of Nenets for Izhma Komi people there.

Third, the villages from the Western part are situated not very far from each other, as well as from the towns of Salekhard and Labytnangi, in which there are some Izhma Komi speakers, too. Izhma Komi speakers from these places keep in touch not only within individual villages. This expands their community and increases the role of the Komi language in their everyday life. Samburg is detached from the main area inhabited by Izhma Komi, and transportation in the region is very complicated. That is why the dominance of the Nenets environment is intensified by the lack of communication with Izhma Komi living in other places (while the community of Izhma Komi in Samburg itself is rather small).

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<sup>6</sup> We do not take into account the village of Nori in this discussion, since we have limited data from there.

### 3. Influence of Russian

#### 3.1 Phonetics

Some phonetic changes in Izhma Komi taking place under the influence of Russian are discussed in Leinonen (2009, p. 314–316), such as phonemes /f/, /x/, /c/ and word-initial consonant clusters in loanwords (e. g. *vlast* ‘power’) which are atypical of Izhma Komi and entered with Russian loanwords. The subdialects we have studied share these features. However, we found one more example of a phonetic change, which concerns not only Russian loanwords, namely consonant devoicing in the word-final position. Komi phonology exhibits a distinct opposition of voiced and voiceless consonants, including the word-final position. However, in the modern language, according to our data, in this position the distinction just mentioned tends to neutralize. Whereas in the normal case Izhma Komi speakers clearly distinguish between the two classes of consonants in this position, cf. *pos* ‘floor’ and *poz* ‘nest’, sometimes voiced consonants appear to be devoiced, as in *č’ol’ep* ‘bright’ (cf. *č’ol’eba* ‘brightly’), *rəmyt* ‘twilight’ (cf. *rəmdyny* ‘to become dusk’), *posn’it* ‘fine (consisting of small particles)’ (cf. *posn’ida* ‘finely’). This process can be characterized as the convergence of articulation modes and positions which happens due to language user’s subconscious intention to mitigate the articulatory difference between the two systems (Matras, 2007, p. 38). This kind of devoicing is typical of the Izhma Komi subdialects we have studied and occurs in the speech of most consultants, though the voiced consonants can be pronounced in this position

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as well. Thus, it can be regarded as Russian influence, since in the Russian phonological system voiced and voiceless consonants are not opposed in the word-final position.

#### 3.2 Loan translations

Izhma Komi develops many polysemy patterns that copy Russian ones and can be analyzed as loan translations. However, in some cases it is difficult to prove this, since it is problematic to find comparative data of Komi that would not have been influenced by Russian.

Similar polysemy patterns in Russian and Izhma Komi usually emerge in metaphoric shifts. Thus, the verb *n’užedny* ‘to pull’ can refer metaphorically to delaying time, similarly to its Russian counterpart *tjanut’*, cf. *təvarse n’užedny* ‘to pull a piece of fabric’ (Russian *tjanut’ tkan’*) vs. *pərase n’užedny* ‘to delay time’ (Russian *tjanut’ vremja*). Some more examples of this kind are the lexemes *nyr* (‘nose’ & ‘bow (of a vessel)’, cf. Russian *nos*), *kol’l’yny* (‘to accompany smb.’ & ‘to spend (time)’, cf. Russian *provodit’*),



*kul'ny* ('to rip (e. g. reindeer skin)' & 'to claim too much money', cf. Russian *sdirat*'), *pan'oony* ('to slurp' & 'to experience (e.g. grief)', cf. Russian *xlebnut*').

The analysis of whether such examples are loan translations or instances of independent semantic development presents some challenges, consider e.g. the discussion in Zalizniak et al. (2012). In some cases similar metaphors refer to the domains brought to Izhma Komi people by Russian culture, which provides an argument for analyzing them as loan translations, such as the verb *vos'tyny* 'to open' used in contexts like *vos'ta bankyn čət* 'I will open a bank account'. The same use is typical of Russian *otkryt* 'to open'.

One more piece of evidence for calquing comes from those cases where Izhma Komi has two means of conveying the same metaphorical expression, one an inherited lexeme or construction, and the other an expression that reproduces a polysemy pattern existing in Russian. Thus, the physical sensation of dizziness is typically expressed with the Izhma Komi construction given in (1):

IZHMA KOMI (MUZHI)

- (1) *jur-e*                      *gəger*    *vetl-e*  
 head-POSS.1SG    around    go-PRS.3  
 'I am feeling dizzy (lit.: My head is going around)'.

In some idiolects this situation can also be described with the verb *bergoony* 'to rotate, to whirl, to spin' (2), which is similar to the polysemy pattern of Russian

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*kružit'sja* (some differences irrelevant for this discussion concern the exact set of rotation frames encoded by Izhma Komi *bergoony* and Russian *kružit'sja*). However, some speakers find sentence (2) unnatural. In this case one can also propose that (2) is an example of semantic calquing.

IZHMA KOMI (MUZHI)

- (2) <sup>?</sup>*jur-e*                      *bergal-e*  
 head-POSS.1SG    rotate-PRS.3  
 'I am feeling dizzy (lit.: My head is rotating)'.

Sometimes, however, a polysemy pattern shared by Izhma Komi and Russian is widespread typologically, which does not make it possible to exclude independent semantic development. This is the case of the verb *gərdlyny* (and Russian *ržat*') referring both to the sound produced by a horse and to a loud laughter. However, such colexification occurs in many other

languages, e.g. in English, German, French, Bashkir (Raxilina et al., 2015, p. 24).

### 3.3 Grammar

The grammatical system of Izhma Komi undergoes some changes under Russian influence that can be described as matter borrowing, pattern borrowing or both. Cases of matter borrowing include, for instance, function words, such as conjunctions *il'i* ‘or’, *što* ‘that’, *potomu što* ‘because’, *štoby* ‘in order to’:

IZHMA KOMI (SALEKHARD & VOSYAKHOVO)

- (3) *a ti vər-a-s ol-an-nyd*  
 {and} you.PL forest-LOC/ILL-POSS.3SG live-NPST.2-2PL  
*il'i kyten=ke tundra-yn?*  
 {or} where=INDF {tundra}-LOC

‘And do you live in the forest or somewhere in the tundra?’ (Archive of Yamal-Region broadcast company, the city of Salekhard, 2006; a reporter born in Vosyakhovo)

IZHMA KOMI (MUZHI)

- (4) *zej una lo-i rəbit-ny, potomu\_što*  
 very much become-PST.3 {work}-INF {because  
*s'emja ydžyd vəl-i*  
 family} large be-PST.3

‘[I] had to work quite a lot, as [my] family was large’.

Another case in which a grammatical marker is directly borrowed from Russian is provided by constructions with the conditional particle *by* of Russian origin:

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IZHMA KOMI (SALEKHARD & VOSYAKHOVO)

- (5) *pom-a-s məd-i by šu-ny*  
 end-LOC/ILL-POSS.3SG want-PST.1SG {COND} say-INF  
*ydžyd at't'ə tav kər-dor-sa-ys-ly, kod*  
 big thanks all reindeer-near-ATTR-POSS.3SG-DAT who  
*kare sečem ydžyd kolana rəbita*  
 make-PRS.3 such big necessary {work}

‘To conclude, I would like to say “Thanks a lot!” to all the reindeer herders doing such necessary work’. (Archive of Yamal-Region broadcast company, the city of Salekhard, 2006; a reporter born in Vosyakhovo)

IZHMA KOMI (BELOYARSK)

- (6) *pyšj-a əd'd'e myj=ke kar-ny, toko by*

run-NPST.1SG fast what=INDF do-INF {only COND  
*uspejt-ny*  
 have.time}-INF

‘I am running fast to do so, if only not to be late’.

Leinonen (2009, p. 314–315) also mentions cases of borrowing Russian morphemes into Izhma Komi, such as the negative prefixes *n’e-* and *n’i-* (*lyln* ‘far’ – *n’eylyn* ‘not far’, *kod* ‘who’ – *n’ikod* ‘nobody’<sup>7</sup>) or the verbal derivational suffix *-n’it* expressing momentaneous actions (claimed to have Russian *-nut*’ as its origin), cf. *tark-ed-ny* ‘knock-CAUS-INF’ vs. *tark-n’it-ny* ‘knock-MOM-INF’. The subdialects we have studied share these features.

Some cases, however, include not only matter borrowing (together with borrowing of grammatical markers), but a possible influence of a pattern attested in Russian on Izhma Komi. For example, in the native complement/purpose construction with the conjunction *medlane* ‘let, in order to’ verbs in the dependent clause can take either past (7) or non-past marking (8).

IZHMA KOMI (OVGORT)

(7) *eč’in’džyk d’iml’al-i, medlane, nu,*  
 a.little.bit clean-PST.1SG in.order.to {well}  
*bi-ys lo-o*  
 fire-POSS.3SG become-PRS.3  
 ‘I cleaned it a little bit so that I had some fire’.

IZHMA KOMI (SAMBURG)

(8) *me məd-a, medlane ti mič’a zon-se*  
 I want-NPST.1SG in.order.to you.PL beautiful boy-ACC.POSS.3  
*me dor-a-m vaj-ed-in-nyd*  
 I at-LOC/ILL-POSS.1SG bring-CAUS-PST.2-2PL  
 ‘I want you to bring that handsome boy to me’.

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A parallel construction with Russian subordinator *štoby* ‘in order to’, as in (9), can be combined only with the past tense of the dependent predicate. This past tense limitation can be considered a pivotal feature of the Russian construction transferred into the target language together with the lexical unit, which results in using *štoby* exclusively with the corresponding past tense form (see Matras & Sakel (2007, p. 830) on pivot-matching).

<sup>7</sup> See also van Alsenoy & van der Auwera (2015) for a broader Uralic background.

IZHMA KOMI (SAMBURG)

- (9) *č'oj-e-ly*                      *kašj-a,*                      *štoby*                      *vo-l-is*  
sister-POSS.1SG-DAT wish-NPST.1SG {in.order.to} come-ITER-PST.3  
*me dor-a-m*  
I at-LOC/ILL-POSS.1SG  
'I wish my sister to come by to my place some time'.

Another instance of pattern replication caused by the borrowing of specific lexical units is the extended use of the spatial postposition *vyy* 'top' with abstract loan nouns, as in *koncert vyle* 'to the concert' or *rabota vyle* 'to work' in (10), replacing the original synthetic strategy with the Illative case, cf. *koncert-e, rabota-e* (Leinonen, 2009, p. 315). This pattern replicates the Russian prepositional pattern with *na* 'onto', 'to' as in *na koncert* 'to the concert' and *na rabotu* 'to work'.

IZHMA KOMI (VOSYAKHOVO)

- (10) *koncert-jas vyl-e vetl-yll-am taten,*  
{concert}-PL top-ILL walk-ITER-NPST.1PL here  
*vystupajt-am bydla-yn*  
{perform}-NPST.1PL everywhere-LOC  
'We visit concerts, perform everywhere'.

Finally, replication of grammatical patterns can take place without matter replication. Such cases can be described as *replica grammaticalization* (Heine & Kuteva, 2003), whereby speakers "are said to replicate the process which is assumed to have already taken place in the model language" (Matras & Sakel, 2007, p. 837). One such example is the formation of a free choice pronoun series (Haspelmath, 1997) in *-s'ure/s'uris* such as *myj-s'ure* 'whatever' or *kod-s'ure* 'whoever' denoting not only freedom but also randomness of choice based on the verb *s'urny* 'to get' (11) marked with present 3SG in *-e* or past 3SG in *-is*. The obvious source of this pattern is the Russian pronouns *čto popalo* 'whatever', *kto popalo* 'whoever' etc. grammaticalized from the verb *popast'* 'get' in the past tense neutral gender form<sup>8</sup>.

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IZHMA KOMI (VOSYAKHOVO)

- (11) *vərga-ys*    *seten abu,*                      *kyti*                      *s'ure*  
well.trodden.path-POSS.3SG there NEG.EX where.PROL INDF

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<sup>8</sup> Interestingly, the same pattern of forming free choice pronouns was attested in Hill Mari, a Finno-Ugric language also being in contact with Russian (see Kalanova 2018).

*kole*                      *mun-ny*  
be.necessary-PRS.3 go-INF

‘There is no well-trodden path, one has to go a random way’.

#### 4. Influence of Nenets and Khanty

##### 4.1 Phonetics

The first issue to be discussed in this section is *hiatus avoidance* in some Izhma Komi subdialects. This constraint on syllable structure is attested typologically (Maddieson, 2013), including Nenets (Salminen, 1998, p. 519) and Khanty (Nikolaeva, 1999, p. 6). Many Komi dialects adopt this phonotactic pattern as well (Sorvačeva et al., 1966, p. 37–44; Žilina, 1975, p. 47–48; Žilina, 1985, p. 30–31). However, Izhma Komi has not developed this constraint, according both to the data published in Saxarova & Sel'kov (1976) and to our own field material from the villages of Muzhi, Vosyakhovo, and Beloyarsk. At the same time, some exceptions are found in Samburg and, to a lesser extent, in Ovgort, consider the following examples collected in Samburg from different speakers: *puve* ‘cooks, is cooking’ instead of *pue*, *lyjajen* ‘with sand’ instead of *lyaen*, *juves* ‘sharp, pointed’ instead of *jues*, *juvas'ny* ‘to ask’ instead of *juas'ny*, *lovannyd* ‘(you.PL) will be’ instead of *loannyd*, *lafkajyn* ‘in a shop’ instead of *lafkayn*, etc.

Since hiatus avoidance is well-attested typologically, it could be logical to suggest that the local subdialects of Samburg and Ovgort developed this strategy independently of any contact-induced phenomena, just following a productive pattern. However, this issue is not so straightforward.

First, as has been stated, hiatus avoidance has not been previously attested in Izhma Komi, so it is not quite clear why these particular subdialects present an exception.

Second, the speakers following this phonotactic pattern have no transparent connections to other Komi dialects where it exists, so there is no evidence to claim any influence of those dialects on the Izhma dialect (which could also have been a possible scenario).

Third, there are some sociolinguistic factors at least in Samburg which favor the development of the pattern concerned in particular idiolects.<sup>9</sup> Those Izhma

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<sup>9</sup> In Ovgort such examples have been attested rather sporadically, therefore it is impossible to establish any reliable sociolinguistic correlations. However, Izhma Komi speakers live in the Khanty environment in this village, and many of them speak Khanty to some extent.

Komi speakers from Samburg (at least five consultants) who adopt this strategy are proficient in Nenets: either they are from mixed Komi-Nenets families, or they have worked a lot in mixed reindeer-herding communities. A striking example is observed in one of the families where the mother (born in 1932) came to Samburg from Muzhi in her childhood and later married a Nenets speaker. While her idiolect preserves the phonotactic pattern of the Muzhi subdialect where the existence of vowel sequences is not restricted, the recordings of her daughter's (born in 1970 in Samburg) speech contain many examples of this kind.

Taking all these facts into consideration, we have some grounds to suggest the contact-induced nature of hiatus avoidance at least in the Samburg subdialect of Izhma Komi. However, there are at least two possible scenarios of this change, which cannot be completely verified without detailed diachronic data which of them actually took place. On the one hand, one can treat hiatus avoidance as an innovation that developed under the influence of the neighboring languages. On the other hand, it is logically possible that the local subdialects we discuss could have developed a typologically frequent pattern independently, or they could have preserved an older pattern also occurring in some European Komi dialects. Even in the latter case it is nevertheless curious that such a process emerged in the area of dense language contact which could have supported it.

The second phenomenon is consonant devoicing in a word-initial position attested in the Ovgort subdialect of Izhma Komi, cf. *kudyr* 'turbid' instead of *gudyr* or *tomema pon* 'leashed dog' instead of *domema pon*. The most plausible explanation for such cases is the influence of Khanty whose phonological system lacks voiced consonants (Nikolaeva, 1999, p. 6). However, the data currently available have occurred only in a few examples from individual speakers and do not represent any kind of systemic change in phonotactics. Therefore they are not sufficient enough to detect clear trends in the development of this process, which requires further investigation.

#### 4.2 Loan translations

In this subsection, we provide several case studies of loan translations in Izhma Komi involving changes in the structure of the lexical domain in question. The source language in these cases is Nenets (more complicated patterns will be stated explicitly).

The first case study deals with Izhma Komi *posture verbs*. The most challenging are the verbs *suloony* 'to stand' and *pukoony* 'to sit' (*sulavny* and *pukavny* respectively in the Standard Komi). In most Izhma Komi subdialects we have studied, the verb *pukoony* can only describe a sitting per-

son or animal. The verb *suloony* has several uses. First, it describes a standing person (or a large animal). Second,

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it refers to the posture of vertically oriented subjects (e. g., trees). Third, it collocates with the names of artifacts (e. g., a cup, a plate, a boat) which are in the position typical of the situation in which they perform their primary function (12). The latter use could probably be influenced by the Russian polysemy pattern, see Raxilina (2008) on the Russian system and Kaškin (2016) for more details on Izhma Komi.

IZHMA KOMI (MUZHI)

- (12) *pyzan vyl-a-s sulal-is s'oj tas'ti*  
 table top-LOC/ILL-POSS.3SG stand-PST.3 clay bowl  
 ‘There was a clay bowl (lit.: standing) on the table’.

However, in the Samburg subdialect of Izhma Komi the verb *pukoony* ‘to sit’ is often used in the latter class of contexts, describing the location of tableware, such as cups or plates, traps for catching birds, benches, and so on; see (13). The terms for vertically oriented subjects, such as a tree or a pole, are compatible with *suloony* ‘to stand’, but incompatible with *pukoony* ‘to sit’, similarly to the other subdialects.

IZHMA KOMI (SAMBURG)

- (13) *č'aška-ys pukal-e pyzan vyl-yn*  
 {cup}-POSS.3SG sit-PRS.3 table top-LOC  
 ‘The cup is (lit.: is sitting) on the table’.

In these examples, the Samburg subdialect of Izhma Komi bears a similarity to Nenets. In Nenets, it is the verb *ngamtyo(sy)* ‘to sit’ (but not *nú(sy)* ‘to stand’) that became a dominant verb in the posture domain, see (14). Our Nenets consultants from Samburg confirm the use of *ngamtyo(sy)* in the list of contexts covered by *pukoony* in the Samburg subdialect of Izhma Komi.

NENETS (Tereščenko, 1965, p. 378)

- (14) *tol-h nyinya xidya-q ngamti-q*  
 {table}-GEN on cup-PL sit-3PL  
 ‘There are cups (lit.: sitting) on the table’.

Among Izhma Komi speakers living in Samburg, the most stable deviation from the general semantic prototype of *pukoony* is demonstrated by those (at least five speakers) who are in more dense contact with Nenets speakers (e. g., in a mixed reindeer-herding community where the default language is Nenets, or in a mixed family). The speakers of the other subdialects concerned evaluate such examples as infelicitous. As regards Komi

dialects in a broader perspective, the verb ‘to sit’ (*pukavny, pukoony, pukalny* in different dialects) does not usually spread to a wide range of contexts similar to what we have observed in Samburg (see Beznosikova (2014, p. 226–228) for details). Some examples of this kind are only mentioned for Udora, Low Vychegda, and Upper Sysola dialects. We have no detailed data on

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the lexical combinability of posture verbs in those dialects, therefore we cannot take it for granted that the pattern in the Samburg subdialect has no parallels (or has some reliable parallels) in other Komi dialects at all. It is however important that a subdialect of Izhma Komi develops in this case a polysemy pattern which does not exist in other close subdialects, and this pattern has a transparent parallel in Nenets being in close contact with the Samburg subdialect of Izhma Komi. That is why the Nenets influence seems to be a reliable explanation here, and its exact mechanism (e. g. whether a completely new polysemy pattern emerged, or the maintenance of some older pattern was supported by language contact) is worth studying further.

Another example of pattern borrowing in the Izhma Komi lexicon is provided by the terms for *cardinal directions* (north, south, west, east)<sup>10</sup>. In the Standard Komi these terms are oriented on the periods of the day, according to the dictionary data from Lytkin (1961). Thus, the north can be labeled as either *voj* ‘night’ or *vojvyv* ‘night + top’, the south as *lun* ‘day’ or *lunvyv* ‘day + top’, the west as *ryt* ‘evening’ or *rytyv* ‘evening + top’ and the east as *asyv* ‘morning’ or *asyvvyv* ‘morning + top’. European Komi dialects, as follows from (Beznosikova 2012, 2014), consistently develop this pattern as well.

As regards the subdialects we have studied, their systems, although maintaining the Standard Komi system to various extents in various subdialects, start to reproduce the strategies typical of Khanty or Nenets that differ from what can be observed in Standard Komi. The first one is the reference to cardinal directions according to *the flow of big rivers* (mainly the Ob river). Thus, the north and the south are basically referred to in the Izhma Komi subdialects of Muzhi, Vosyakhovo, Ovgort, and Beloyarsk as *katyd* ‘the south = upper reach’ and *kyytyd* ‘the north = lower reach’ respectively. The same strategy is the basic one in Khanty, cf. *owəs* ‘the north’ (derived from

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<sup>10</sup> See Palmer (2015) and references therein for some typological background.



*ow* ‘mouth of a river’) and *nŭm muw* ‘the south (lit.: upper land)’, see Koškareva et al. (2017, p. 193–195) for more details.

The second strategy is referring to the west as the direction towards the Ural Mountains. In Izhma Komi (Muzhi, Vosyakhovo, Ovgort, Beloyarsk) this direction is typically denoted with the noun *iz* meaning ‘stone; Urals; the west’, e. g. *iz təð* ‘west wind’. The same (or obviously analogous) polysemy has been attested for Khanty *kew* ‘stone’ and Nenets *pæq nyangi* – lit.: ‘side of the stone’ (Koškareva et al., 2017, p. 192–195). One could have expected such uses of the word *iz* towards the east in the European Komi dialects, but there is no such evidence at least in Beznosikova (2012, p. 582–583).

In the third strategy, cardinal directions are defined through the solar cycle. Thus, in Samburg the west can be called *šondy leč’č’ann’in* ‘the location where the sun sets’, and a possible reference to the east is *šondy kavann’in* ‘the location where

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the sun rises’. We do not have any statistical data to evaluate how conventional these labels are in the Samburg subdialect, but at least these terms were suggested by consultants who are involved in reindeer herding and regularly use such concepts in their everyday activities.

According to Koškareva et al. (2017, p. 192), the same patterns exist in various Nenets dialects, consider e. g. such terms for the west as *yalyah pədyo* ‘sunset’, *yalyah pədyiləwa* ‘location of sunset’ or terms for the east like *yalem tath nyangi ya* ‘land at the side of sunrise’, *xuna xayer jurkota* ‘where the sun rises’, etc. To sum up, in the case of cardinal directions the general organization of the semantic domain in Nenets and Khanty has influenced Izhma Komi and caused a shift from a rather abstract field-based orientation system (Talmy, 2000, p. 213) like in the European Komi dialects and in Standard Komi to a guidepost-based orientation system with reference to directly observable natural phenomena.

Some of the attested loan translations involve complex interactions of languages and cultures. A striking example is provided by *euphemistic terms for a wolf*. Siberian languages tend to use indirect labels for dangerous animals, see Tereščenko (1965, p. 938–939) for such Nenets terms for a bear as *pəryidyenya* ‘black’, *yiryi* ‘old man’ etc., as well as the data laid out in Koškareva et al. (2017, p. 125–131). The motivation for this taboo follows from the fact that dangerous animals were traditionally considered as magic entities able to understand human speech and to cause harm to humans if named explicitly. Such phenomena were also attested in Komi, see

Xauzenberg (1972); Kuznecova (2010); and Koškareva et al. (2017, p. 125–158) for animal terms in Komi and other languages, especially for the terms for such dangerous animals as a wolf or a bear. However, euphemisms for a wolf have not been mentioned for Komi dialects spoken in the European part of Russia. Xauzenberg (1972) provides the only one found in Izhma Komi (in the Komi Republic) but, as follows from her data, already going out of use in 1972. This is *l'ok zver* ‘bad beast’<sup>11</sup>, while the commonly used term in Komi dialects is *kəjin* ‘wolf’.

In the subdialects of Izhma Komi spoken in the Yamal-Nenets district, the situation is the opposite to what is claimed in (Xauzenberg 1972). The lexeme *kəjin* is unfamiliar to most of our consultants, whereas euphemisms for a wolf are highly productive. The most common one is *l'ok zver* ‘bad beast’ already attested in Xauzenberg (1972), sometimes in a “shortened” variant *zver* ‘beast’. In the subdialects of Beloyarsk and Samburg spoken in the Nenets environment, there are even more euphemisms<sup>12</sup>. In Beloyarsk these are *yllasa* ‘located outside’, *ly bəž / ly bəža*

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‘bone tail / having a bone tail’, *kuz' bəž / kuz' bəža* ‘long tail / having a long tail’. In Samburg, along with the above-mentioned expressions *ly bəž / ly bəža* and *kuz' bəž / kuz' bəža*, these are *l'ok* ‘bad’ (probably coming from *l'ok zver*), *yllayn vetlalys* ‘walking outside’, *voj vetlalys* ‘walking at night’, *buka* ‘evil spirit’, *joma* ‘witch’. Some examples are given in (15)–(16):

IZHMA KOMI (SAMBURG)

- (15) *una kər džaged-is joma*  
 many reindeer throttle-PST.3 witch  
 ‘A wolf (lit.: a witch) throttled many reindeers’.

IZHMA KOMI (BELOYARSK)

- (16) *yllasa-se ad'd'-i i zej*  
 located.outside-ACC.POSS.3 see-PST.1SG {and} very  
*poo-z'-i*  
 be.afraid-INCH-PST.1SG  
 ‘I saw a wolf and got very scared’.

<sup>11</sup> Interestingly, the noun *zver* ‘beast’ in this expression is a Russian borrowing.

<sup>12</sup> We do not have sufficiently large statistical data to carefully rank all these euphemistic terms from more to less conventionalized. However, each of them was suggested by several native speakers when asked how the wolf can be referred to in their subdialect.

It should be noted that euphemisms for a wolf are more widespread in the areas of dense contact between Izhma Komi and Nenets. The terms occurring in Beloyarsk and Samburg mostly have parallels in Nenets. Thus, the expressions *yllasa* ‘located outside’ and *yllayn vetlalys* ‘walking outside’ are similar to Nenets *pylxiy* ‘located outside’ and *pyiwnya yaderta* ‘walking in the street’ (Koškareva et al., 2017, p. 128). The label *kuz’ bəž / kuz’ bəža* ‘long tail / having a long tail’ could be influenced by the Nenets expression *tæwa yamp* ‘long tail’ given in Tereščenko (1965, p. 684)<sup>13</sup>. The comparison of a wolf to evil spirits is analogous to the polysemy of Nenets *ngilyeka* ‘evil spirit causing illness’ (Tereščenko, 1965, p. 409). As regards the euphemism *voj vetlalys* ‘walking at night’ based on the time period where a wolf is the most active, we have not found a Nenets parallel so far, but such terms are widespread in Khanty (Koškareva et al., 2017, p. 130), so this pattern, in general, exists in the Siberian area.

Thus, Izhma Komi subdialects maintaining dense contact with Nenets develop a set of euphemistic expressions untypical of the Komi lexicon in general, but common for indigenous Siberian languages. This provides grounds for treating this phenomenon as the result of Nenets (or, in some cases, of Khanty) influence. Moreover, the cultural motivation for indirect reference to a wolf could also be caused by the Komi-Nenets interaction due to its maintenance in mixed reindeer-herding communities.

Some loan translations in Izhma Komi involve *interaction with both Nenets and Russian*. We consider two examples of this kind. The first one deals with the

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domains of guarding and keeping, while the second one concerns the terms for marital relations.

The first example is provided by the verb *karol’itny* in the Samburg subdialect of Izhma Komi. In the other subdialects, this verb means ‘to herd reindeer, to keep watch over reindeer’ (17). Its counterpart in other Komi dialects is the verb *karaul’itny* (Beznosikova, 2012, p. 638) transparently borrowed from Russian *karaulit’* ‘to guard’.

IZHMA KOMI (VOSYAKHOVO)

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<sup>13</sup> Probably a similar motivation works for *ly bəž / ly bəža* ‘bone tail / having a bone tail’. We have not come across the exact Nenets correspondence to this expression, but the pattern of referring to a wolf through a characteristic of its tail is attested in Nenets.

- (17) *a me mun-i byk-se karol'it-ny*  
 {and} I go-PST.1SG {stag}-ACC.POSS.3 {watch.over}-INF  
 ‘And I went to watch over the stags’.

In the Samburg subdialect of Izhma Komi, in addition to its primary meaning, this Russian borrowing develops in some idiolects a meaning ‘to store’, as in (18). The default lexeme for the latter context in Izhma Komi is the verb *vid'ny* ‘to store’, which cannot however refer to watching over reindeer.

IZHMA KOMI (SAMBURG)

- (18) *menam č'oj-e karol'it-e*  
 I.GEN sister-POSS.1SG {herd}-PRS.3  
*jem-jas-se tuč'u-yn*  
 needle-PL-ACC.POSS.3 bag-LOC  
 ‘My sister stores her needles in a bag’.

This polysemy in the Samburg subdialect of Izhma Komi is probably influenced by Nenets. Occurring only in this area where a small group of Izhma Komi speakers lives in a dominant Nenets environment, it reproduces the polysemy of Nenets *letmpø(sy)* ‘to store; to herd reindeer, to watch over reindeer’ attested both in Tereščenko (1965, p. 205) and in our field data.

The next example of multilingual interaction are kinship terms, namely the terms for *a husband and a wife*. The default term for a husband in the subdialects in question is a Russian loanword *mužyk* (while the noun *veres* corresponding to Standard Komi *verəs* is almost out of use). In addition, our field data from Samburg, as well as the archival materials from Kharsaim (Priuralsky region) contain the term *starik / tarik* (borrowed from Russian *starik* ‘old man’):

IZHMA KOMI (SAMBURG)

- (19) *menam tarik-e ton skəral-e*  
 I.GEN {old.man}-POSS.1SG today be.angry-PRS.3  
 ‘My husband is angry today’.

A wife is usually referred to with either a Standard Komi word *gətyr* or a Russian loanword *baba* originally meaning ‘woman’. In Samburg, however, there is one more

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possible option, namely a noun *staruxa / taruxa* (< Russian *staruxa* ‘old woman’) functioning as a parallel to *starik / tarik*.

Such examples systematically occur in the speech of both older people and of the consultants being about 45 years old. They are however atypical of the other Komi dialects: the dialectal dictionary (Beznosikova, 2014,

p. 425) contains no evidence of *starik / tarik* being the term for a husband, and in Muzhi and the neighboring villages it can occur only in the speech of the older generation remaining an indication of the age. At the same time, the polysemy ‘old man’ & ‘husband’ is productive in the Samoyedic languages: it is developed by Nenets *wæsako* (Tereščenko, 1965, p. 77) and also exists in Selkup (Koškareva et al., 2017, p. 52), Enets (Sorokina, Bolina, 2009, p. 86, 231), and Nganasan (Kosterkina et al., 2001, p. 29). Taking into account the long-term contact between Izhma Komi and Nenets, it is, therefore, possible to analyze it as a loan translation. In this case, Izhma Komi borrows a polysemy pattern typical of a vast area, while the loan-words themselves come from Russian.

### 4.3 Grammar

We do not have many examples of grammatical changes in Izhma Komi which can be explained by Nenets or Khanty influence. However, one interesting example is found in adnominal possessive constructions in the Ovgort subdialect of Izhma Komi which is in dense contact with Khanty. (See Privoznov (2010) on these constructions in Western Khanty; Nekrasova (2003) and Pleshak (2018) for the background on Komi.) For some Izhma Komi speakers living in Ovgort, the nominative marking of a possessor has a broader use than it has in Komi in general. It has not, however, become a stable feature of the Ovgort subdialect. Such speakers provide examples like (20)–(21), where a possessor is marked with the nominative, but not with genitive as expected in such cases. The default options for (20)–(21) would be *menam mame* ‘I.GEN mother-POSS.1SG’ and *mašalen kijasys* ‘Masha-GEN hand-PL-POSS.3SG’ respectively.

IZHMA KOMI (OVGORT)

- (20) *me mam-e rəd'ič'-č'-is myžy-yn*  
 I {mother}-POSS.1SG {give.birth}-DETR-PST.3 Muzhi-LOC  
 ‘My mother was born in Muzhi’.

IZHMA KOMI (OVGORT)

- (21) *maša ki-jas-ys sečem mič'a-es'*  
 {Masha} hand-PL-POSS.3SG so beautiful-PL  
 ‘Masha’s hands are so beautiful’.

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Bearing in mind the dense interaction between Izhma Komi and Khanty in Ovgort, one might suggest that these possessive constructions discussed developed under the influence of Khanty. As there is no genitive in the Khanty case system, the surface morphosyntactic variation in Khanty possessive constructions is reduced to whether or not the head bears a pos-

sessive marker, while the possessor is always marked with nominative, cf. the following Khanty examples from Nikolaeva (1999, p. 52): *ma xo:p* ‘my boat’ vs. *ma xo:p-e:m* ‘my boat-POSS.1SG’, *Juwan xo:t-na* (John house-LOC) ‘in John’s house’ vs. *ma xo:t-e:m-na* (I house-POSS.1SG-LOC) ‘in my house’. The latter is just what we observe in examples like (20)–(21) from the Ovgort subdialect of Izhma Komi. Interestingly, this phenomenon has a parallel in another area of contact between Western Khanty and Nenets. According to Koškareva (2013), some dialects of Forest Nenets spoken in the Khanty environment also tend to allow a more frequent nominative marking of a possessor, which is not typical of other Nenets dialects.

## 5. Discussion

To sum up, we have discussed some changes in Izhma Komi which have presumably been caused by its interaction with Russian, on the one hand, and with Nenets and Khanty, on the other hand. They involve pattern borrowing in lexical semantics, as well as some changes dealing with phonetics and morphosyntax. What follows from it are two issues interesting for areal typology.

The first issue concerns the extent to which the indigenous languages of Western Siberia actually influence Izhma Komi spoken by “newcomers.” In modern areal typology, an important borderline is drawn between just borrowing the phonological form of lexemes, on the one hand, and pattern borrowing which involves some structural innovation, on the other hand (Thomason, 2001, p. 70–71). The latter type correlates with the greater intensity of language contact. In contrast to the previous studies which focused on the simple lexical borrowing in this area (primarily from Nenets into Komi), we have observed a productive pattern borrowing: loan translations in the lexicon, and also copying some patterns in phonetics and grammar. This indicates that at least some of Izhma Komi subdialects are at a more intensive degree of language contact with the indigenous languages of this area than it was claimed before.

The second issue is the comparison of the sociolinguistic situation, first, in Komi-Nenets and Komi-Khanty contact zones and, second, in the contact of Komi with Russian and with other indigenous languages of Siberia. As can be seen from the discussion in this article, borrowing from Russian is more intensive in Izhma Komi than borrowing from Nenets and Khanty, which correlates with the status of

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Russian as the dominant language in this area. As regards the two indigenous languages, Izhma Komi is more disposed to pattern borrowing from

Nenets than from Khanty. Borrowing from Nenets is more widespread in Samburg, borrowing from Khanty — to a lesser extent — in Ovgort.

The amount of contact-induced change in the area under discussion depends on the sociolinguistic situation in its different parts. This factor explains the differences between Nenets borrowings and Khanty borrowings at least for the Izhma Komi subdialects we have studied.

### **List of abbreviations (different from the Leipzig Glossing Rules)**

ATTR – attributivizer; DETR – detransitive marker; ILL – illative; INCH – inchoative; MOM – momentary action; NPST – non-past tense; PTCP.ACT – active participle.

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