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Contact-induced change in Dolgan : an investigation into the role of linguistic data for the reconstruction of a people's (pre)history

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SUMMARY

This dissertation is a study of contact-induced linguistic change in Dolgan and explores the role linguistic data can play in the reconstruction of a people's (pre)history. While the study is primarily linguistic, its second main goal is to interpret the linguistic results in an interdisciplinary context, using insights from history, ethnography and population genetics. Thus, it provides an example of the innovative ways data from different disciplines can be combined to gain a deeper understanding of a people's past and identity.

Dolgan is a Turkic language spoken on the Taimyr Peninsula in northern Siberia and in the Anabar region of Yakutia. The history of the Dolgan people is characterised by contact between different populations, in particular between the Turkic Sakha and the Tungusic Evenks. In the literature, the Dolgans are often described as a mixed people, with both Turkic and Tungusic influences. However, it is not clear whether they were Turkic people who adopted Tungusic cultural features and a Tungusic name (Dolgan), or that they were mainly Tungusic groups who adopted a Turkic language. By combining insights from different disciplines, this study can shed new light on these issues.

Chapter 1 sets out the aims of the thesis, provides the geographical and sociolinguistic details of the field sites and launches the methodological framework used to identify contact-induced change.

Chapter 2 provides a detailed picture of the geographical, historical and ethnographic characteristics of the Dolgan people and introduces the linguistic situation on the Taimyr. It illustrates the complex history of the Dolgan people, and addresses the role politics can play in the appearance and disappearance of a people on the ethnographic map. It is shown that state ethnographers did not restrict themselves to a description of the indigenous people of Siberia, but also shaped and manipulated their identity according to their personal and political goals. This subjectivity complicates a reconstruction of the 'facts' in the ethnic history of the Dolgans, but this problem can partly be solved by the more objective data acquired through DNA-analysis. Analysis of the mtDNA (the maternal line) shows that women were very mobile on the Taimyr Peninsula, and that they often married into ethnic groups different from their own. Analysis of the Y-chromosome shows admixture between ethnic groups in the paternal line, and in particular with the Tungusic Evenks. The genetic profile of the Dolgans reveals

that one third, and potentially two thirds (depending on the analysis) of the Dolgan population has Tungusic ancestors, confirming the hypothesis of intense Tungusic contact.

Chapter 3 gives an overview of the field of contact linguistics, and introduces concepts from theories of language contact that are essential for the analysis of contact-induced change in the chapters to follow. In absence of a single all-encompassing model of contact-induced, in this study an eclectic approach is adopted, using concepts from several theories that proved useful for the analysis of the Dolgan data. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the role of language contact theory in the study of contact-induced change.

Chapter 4 investigates lexical differences between Dolgan and Sakha. After an introduction to the analytical framework that is employed for the analysis of lexical change, six types of difference are analysed in both a quantitative and a qualitative way. For the quantitative analysis, the proportion of differences between Dolgan and Sakha is determined for 24 semantic fields. For the qualitative analysis, the focus shifts towards the six types of difference themselves. An investigation of their relative frequency shows that the most common type of difference between Dolgan and Sakha is semantic change and a detailed analysis of this type of difference reveals important changes in the semantic structure of kinship terminology as well as the semantic field 'the body'. The lexical form of these words corresponds to the one used in Sakha, but the semantic structure matches the one of Evenki. This leads to the conclusion that most probably this change took place by groups of Evenks who shifted to Dolgan, but kept their traditional social structure. Finally replacement is discussed, analysing copies from both Evenki and Russian.

Chapter 5 discusses morphological differences in the inflectional paradigms of the auxiliary verb *e-* 'to be' and of unstable noun stems. These paradigms show irregular inflection in Sakha, whereas in Dolgan they have developed a regularised alternative. While explicitly leaving room for a language-internal explanation, it is argued that this regularisation may have been accelerated by Evenks who learned Dolgan as a second language.

In Chapter 6 the habitual participle is examined. Analysis of the morphosyntactic properties of this participle, as well as of its frequency of use shows that Dolgan and Sakha differ significantly in both respects. In contrast to Sakha, where the participle is used with a verbal as well as with a nominal function, the nominal use in Dolgan does not occur. However, the verbal use of the

participle occurs with a much higher frequency than in Sakha. Although more research is needed to confirm this hypothesis, it is noted that the use of the habitual participle in Dolgan is more similar to the morphosyntactic properties of the habitual in Tungusic languages than its use in Sakha.

The next difference concerns word order patterns. Chapter 7 shows that Dolgan allows much more flexibility in this domain than Sakha. Instead of applying strict SOV order as do most Turkic and Tungusic languages, the spoken text corpus of Dolgan reveals a high percentage of sentences with SVO order. While a language-internal explanation for this difference cannot be excluded, a more plausible explanation seems to be the increasing social and linguistic dominance of Russian in the Dolgan community, in which SVO is the unmarked word order.

Finally, in Chapter 8 differences in clause combining strategies are analysed. These appear to be rather diverse, and it is argued that some of them could be the result of contact with Evenki, whereas the majority seems to have developed more recently as a result of the increasing linguistic dominance of Russian. Due to the complex combination of relevant social factors and the diversity of linguistic outcomes this chapter, in particular, highlights the importance of multi-causality in the explanation of contact-induced change.

Chapter 9 offers a detailed discussion of the conclusions reached in the individual chapters, embedding the linguistic results in the historical, ethnographic and genetic context presented in Chapter 2, and viewing the set of changes as a whole. It is shown that Turkic Sakha and Tungusic Evenks are the primary ancestors of the current Dolgan population. Contact between these groups may go back as far as the 17th century, but the crucial period was the end of the 18th and the 19th centuries, when several groups of Sakha and Evenks settled along the Khatanga Trading Way and engaged in the developing trade with the Russians. Integrating anyone who participated in this new way of life, a new community emerged that adopted Sakha as its main language of communication, which had already been in use as a lingua franca. The language that developed in this setting later became known as the Dolgan language. It is based on Sakha, but shows lexical and structural influences from Evenki and Russian. In the second half of the 20th century, Dolgan became the official ethnonym of this diverse and dynamic group in arctic Siberia.

Chapter 10 concludes the thesis with a brief conclusion and an outlook for future research.