Passive constructions in Uralic: a special case of contact-induced development?

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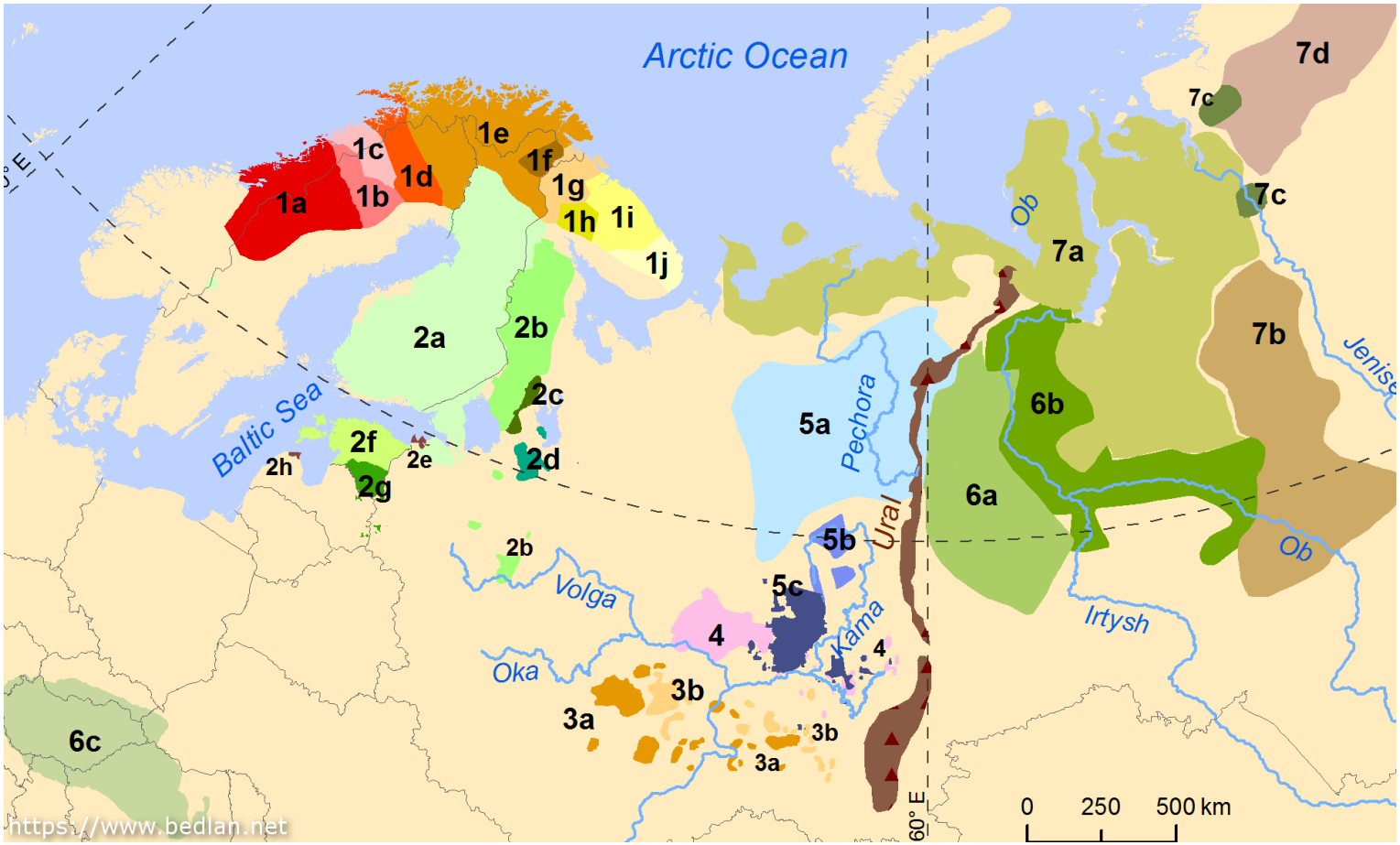
The structure of my talk

Uralic languages



Passive constructions in Uralic

Polysemous valency-changing affixes (see [Haspelmath 1990]): may form passives, anticausatives, reflexives, impersonals etc.

Hill Mari

(1) amasa ške=ok **pač-ôlt-ôn**
door REFL=EMPH open-DETR-PRF.3SG
'The door opened on its own'. [My fieldwork data]

(2) maša **môšk-ôlt-ôn**
M. wash-DETR-PRF.3SG
'Mary has washed herself'. [My fieldwork data]

Passive constructions in Uralic

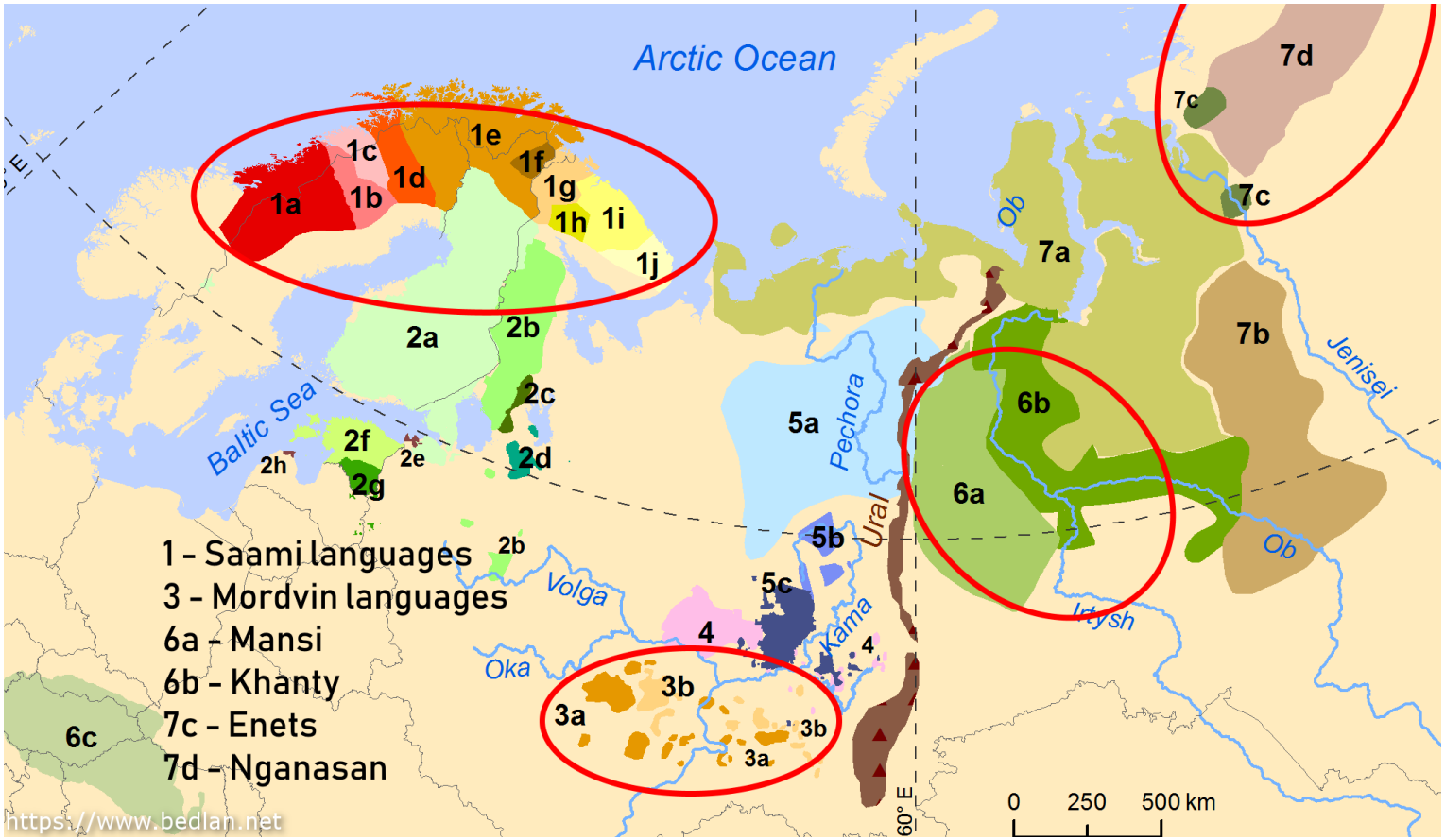
The focus of my research: those Uralic languages which have developed a full-fledged personal derivational passive, where the Patient is promoted to subject position but the expression of the Agent is still possible.

Moksha Mordvin

(3) vas'ɛ šuvə-z'ə lotk'-t
Vasya dig-PST.3SG.S.3SG.O hole-DEF.SG.GEN
'Vasya has dug a hole'. [My fieldwork data]

(4) lotk-s' **šuvə-v-s'** (vas'ɛ-n'd'i)
hole-DEF.SG dig-PASS-PST.3SG V.-DAT
'The hole was dug by Vasya'. [My fieldwork data]

Passive constructions in Uralic



Passive constructions in Uralic

Derivational personal passive is found in a rather small number of Uralic languages.

In ”Western” Uralic languages (Mordvin, Saami) passive is definitely an independent development.

In ”Eastern” Uralic languages we see more languages with personal passive on a smaller territory: **Ob-Ugric** and **Northern Samoyedic**

I would like to have a closer look at these 4 languages and to discuss possible scenarios of passive development in this region.

The languages in focus: Ob-Ugric

Mansi

Approx. 1000 speakers, only the Northern dialects still remain alive. Data: personal fieldwork in 2017-2018 (Upper Lozva dialect): [Kulonen 1989], [Rombandeeva 1973] etc.

Khanty

Approx. 10000 speakers, significant dialectal variation. Data: personal fieldwork in 2018 (Kazym dialect); [Kulonen 1989], [Filchenko 2007] etc.

My work on the Ob-Ugric languages is being supported by the RFBR grant №18-012-00833A ”Dynamics of phonetical and grammatical systems of Ob-Ugric languages”

The languages in focus: Northern Samoyedic

Nganasan

Approx. 100 speakers. Data: the NSLC corpus; [Tereshenko 1979], [Helimski 1998], [Leisiö 2006] etc.

Enets

Approx. 40 speakers of two Enets varieties - Forest Enets and Tundra Enets. Data: the ELCS corpus; [Siegl 2013].

I would like to thank Valentin Gusev for his valuable comments on Northern Samoyedic data.

Mansi passive

In Mansi, passive derivatives are formed with the suffix **-we**. The passive verb agrees with the Patient and the Agent may be expressed and marked with the **lative** case:

(5) ti xāp anum-n **wār-we-s**
this boat me.OBL-LAT make-PASS-PST.3SG
'This boat was made by me'. [My fieldwork data]

Khanty passive

The Khanty passive suffix has the form **-(a)j**. The Agent may be expressed and marker with the **locative** case:

(6) min jaqqeł-am-nə noq **wej-ojmən**
1DU parents-POSS.1DU-LOC up take-PASS.1DU
kanikul-nam
holidays-LAT
'We were taken by our parents for the holidays'.
[Filchenko 2007: 392]

The origin of Ob-Ugric passive suffixes

The Mansi passive marker originates from Proto-Uralic "stative" ***w**, while in Khanty there are no reflexes of ***w**, see [Kulonen 1989].

The Khanty suffix **-(a)j** originates from P-U reflexive ***j**, see [Collinder 1965: 274-281].

Thus, Ob-Ugric languages exhibit different passive markers and case marking of the Agent (lative vs. locative), despite their genetic and areal closeness.

The origin of Ob-Ugric passive suffixes

This type of passive might have emerged in the Proto-Ob-Ugric language and later the formal marking became different.

The difference in case marking of the Agent may have arisen due to the formal similarity of the Mansi lative **-n(a)** and the Khanty locative **-nə**, although the origin of the cases is different: Mansi **-n(a)** < ***nää-j** (Proto-Ob-Ugric postposition + lative), Khanty **-nə** < ***na** (Proto-Uralic locative), see e.g.[Keresztes 1998: 409].

Nganasan passive

In Nganasan, passive derivatives are formed with the suffix **-ru** and its various allomorphs. The Agent is marked with the **lative** case:

(7) təndə-tə **ləŋi-bti-ri-d'ii-ðə**
that-LAT burn-CAUS-PASS-PRET-3SG.R
i-bahu školə-mu?
be-RENARR.3SG.S school-POSS.1PL
'They say it was him who has set our school on fire'.
[LangueDoc: Nganasan]

Enets passive

Enets passive constructions are very similar to the Nganasan ones: the Agent is also in the **lative** case and the suffix has the form **-ra**, which is congate to the Nganasan **-ru**:

(8) bunki-d **sarkra-r-ii?**
dog-LAT.SG bite-PASS-1SG.R
'I was bitten by a dog. [Siegl 2013: 408]

The origin of Northern Samoyedic passive suffixes

The suffixes **-ra/-ru** have passive/causative polysemy and originate from the Proto-Samoyedic causative ***rå**, see [Helimski 1982]. In both Nganasan and Enets, they are used as causative as well as passive markers.

Nganasan

(9) t'ai-t'i maa-raa-t'i bən'd'ə
tea-ACC.PL.POSS.3SG what-LIM-ACC.PL.P.3SG all.ACC
t'enti-ri-ʔə
be.ready-CAUS-PRF.3SG.S.
'He made everything ready (for tea)'. [NSLC]

The origin of Northern Samoyedic passive suffixes

Passive/causative polysemy is common around the Northern Samoyedic area as well (see [Nedjalkov 1993] and [Robbeets 2007] for Tungusic and Turkic examples).

However, in Southern Samoyedic languages, the affix ***rå** has not developed the passive function: in Selkup and Mator we find this marker only in its causative use.

Thus, the development of passive occurred after the split of the Proto-Samoyedic language (after the 1st century A.D., see [Janhunen 1998]).

Syntactic behaviour of passive derivatives

In all 4 languages, the Patient is promoted to the subject position and controls verb agreement.

The Agent may be either omitted or expressed.

In Mansi, Enets and Nganasan the expressed Agent is marked with the lative case, while the Khanty language uses the locative case in this function.

Syntactic behaviour of passive derivatives

In Ob-Ugric, both transitive and intransitive verbs may be passivized and almost any constituent may be promoted to the subject position.

Northern Khanty

(10) äjku-nə os **joɣt-i**
young.man-LOC again come-PST.PASS.3SG
'The young man came to him again'. [Filchenko 2007: 395]

Syntactic behaviour of passive derivatives

In Enets and Nganasan, passivization of intransitive verbs is usually possible only after preliminary transitivization via valency-increasing derivational affixes.

Nganasan

(11) mənə təniʔi͡a **munu-ra-ʔi-nə**
I so say-PASS-PRF-1SG.R
'I was told so'. [NSLC]

Functions of passive suffixes

Although syntactic behaviour of passive derivatives is different in some respects, their functions are suprisingly uniform.

[Leisiö 2006], on Nganasan, [Siegl 2013] on Forest Enets, [Virtanen 2015] on Mansi, [Filchenko 2006] on Khanty: passive constructions are used as one of the main strategies of **governing the information structure** (together with DOM and S-O agreement system).

The subject is the most topical constituent: a focal Agent gets demoted the topical Patient gets promoted to the subject position.

Other constituents also may be promoted if they manage to get higher on the topicality scale.

Frequency of passive derivatives

In all these languages, pragmatic passive constructions are very frequent in texts, e.g. in ”Wogulische Volksdichtung” (a collection of Mansi texts gathered by A. Kannisto in the beginning of the 20th century) we find **1937** passive sentences.

In the Nganasan NSLC corpus there are **567** instances of the passive marker.

In the Enets ELCS corpus we find only **80** occurences of this marker, however, the Enets corpus is much smaller.

Other Uralic languages

Saami and Mordvin do not use passive constructions this way, e.g. the Mordvin passive is used as the main means of expressing dynamic modality and has no effect on the information structure itself:

Moksha Mordvin

(12) mon pid'-əv-ən' l'ɛm
I cook-PASS-PST.1SG soup
'I cooked soup'. [Fieldwork data]

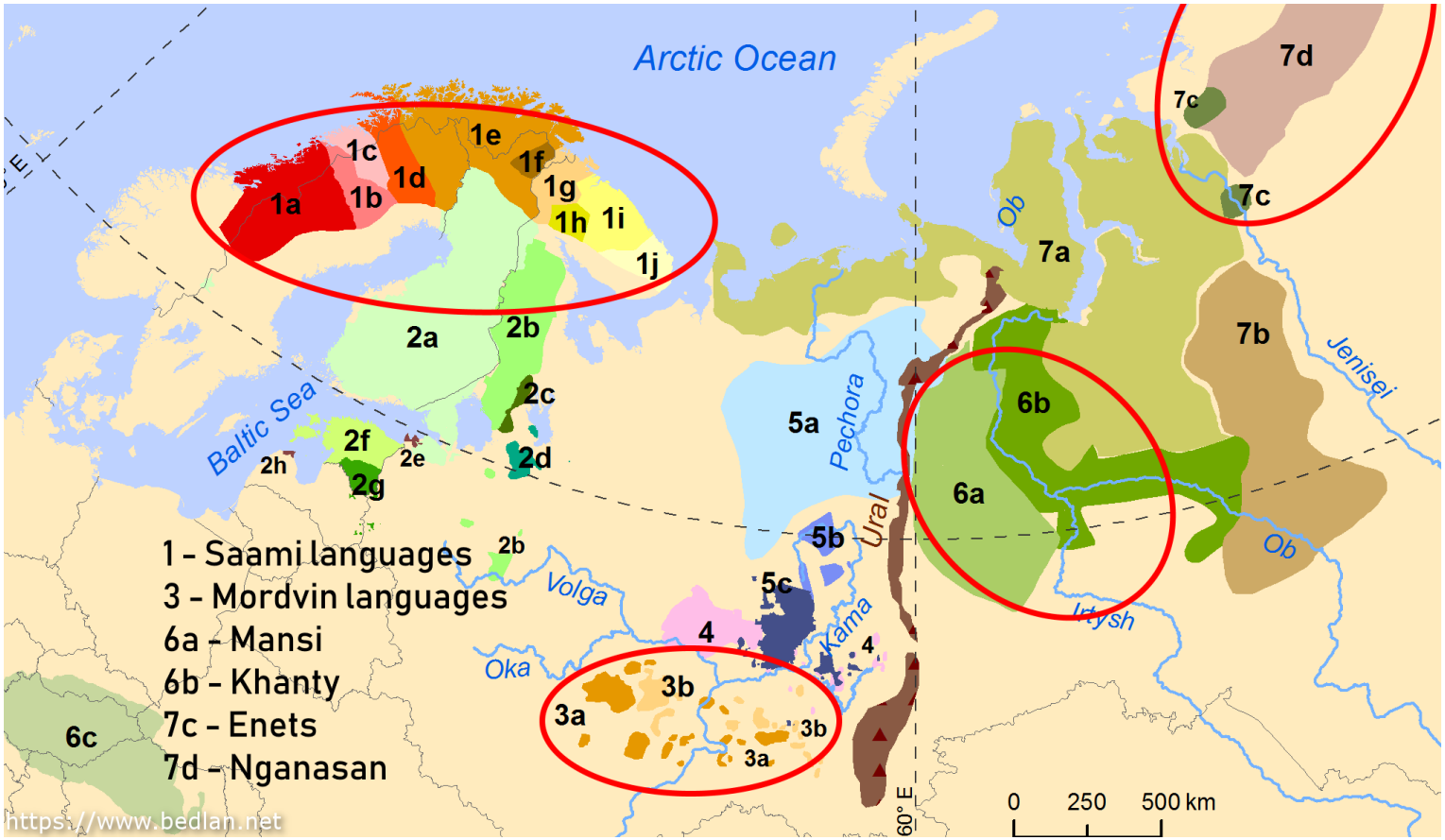
(13) mon'-d'ej-ən' **pid'-əv-s'** l'ɛm
I.OBL-PRON.DAT-1SG.POSS.SG cook-PASS-PST.3SG soup
'I managed to cook soup (although I never did it before'. [Fieldwork data]

Areal influence?

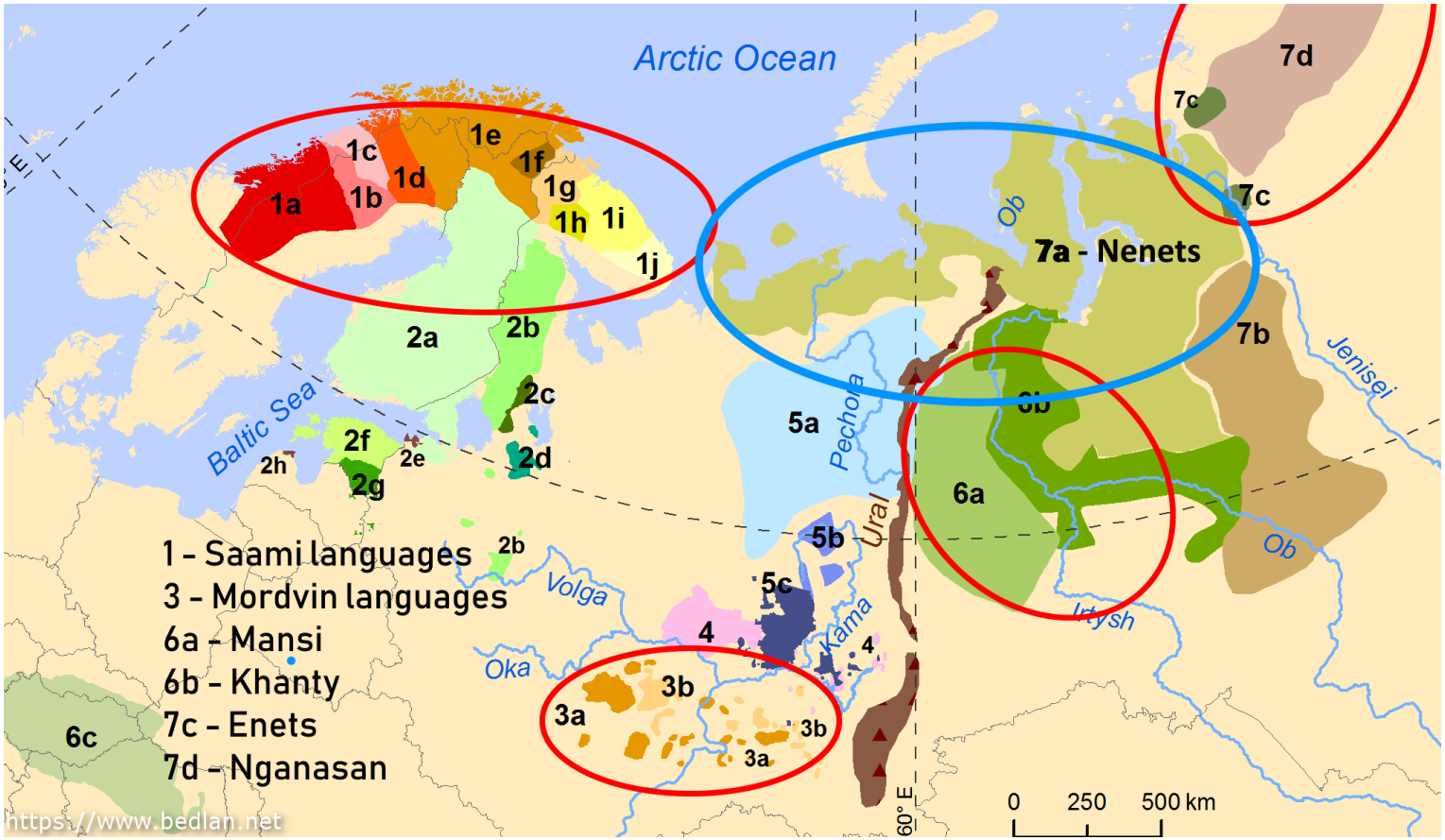
The functional and formal similarities of Ob-Ugric and Northern Samoyedic passive constructions compared to other Uralic languages make us believe that this development is hardly a coincidence.

Most probably, the development of passive constructions occurred in all Ob-Ugric and Northern Samoyedic languages as a contact-induced phenomenon (see [Aikhenvald 2011] on such areal influence).

Areal influence?



The Nenets problem



Passive in Nenets?

Nenets (Northern Samoyedic) attests a few examples of passive uses of the same causative/passive marker as in other Northern Samoyedic languages, **-ra** < ***rå** (see [Salminen 1998: 543], but this construction is not to be productively used anymore.

Tundra Nenets ELCS corpus: only 1 example of **-ra** in its passive function:

(14) xər-ta to-bcaki° n′iwi°q
self-POSS.3SG come-POT.3SG.S NEG.INFR.3PL.S
ŋæ-b°-ta **xada-ra-q**
be-COND-POSS.3SG kill-PASS-CN
'He will come on his own if he wasn't killed'. [ELCS: Tundra Nenets]

No areal influence?

The Nenets language with its lack of passive creates a rift between other Northen Samoyedic and Ob-Ugric languages, which causes problems for our hypothesis of contact-induced development.

We can give up and suggest the Ob-Ugric and Nganasan-Enets passives developed independently, but there are several objections.

Possible objections

1. The split of the Northern Samoyedic branch occurred very recently (approx. 1000 years ago), and Enets and Nganasan would hardly manage to develop anything separate from Nenets in such a short time, also Enets and Nenets supposedly split even later, see [Janhunen 1998];
2. Unlike Selkup and Mator, where we find no instances of ***rå** in passive function at all, Nenets does have some examples of this marker as a passive;
3. As shown earlier, derivational pragmatic passive is very rare in Uralic and exists only in this region;
4. In this region, 3 various formal markers are used in the same function, which is a ”symptom” of possible contact-induced development.

Ugric-Samoyedic contacts

Although the main contacts in this area are Khanty/Mansi and Khanty/Nenets, a broader Ugric-Samoyedic mutual influence is plausible (see [Helimski 2003]).

Numerous common Ugric-Samoyedic developments, such as the subject-object agreement system (see [Helimski 1982]).

Apart from recent areal connections such as Nenets-Khanty there are ancient links as well, see [Helimski 1989: 27]: ”some archeological cultures of the Ob-Irtysh area in the II-I millenia B. C. may have a mixed Ugric-Samoyedic origin”.

Conclusion

Summing up all the facts presented above, I propose that the development of pragmatic derivational passive occurred as a contact-induced phenomenon in all **five** languages (Mansi, Khanty, Nenets, Enets, Nganasan.

Afterwards, the use of pragmatic voice drastically decreased in Nenets, which created a rift between the other two pairs of languages.

Because of that, Ob-Ugric and other Northern Samoyedic languages each have their own peculiarities in the use of passive constructions, while their basic structure remains the same.

Conclusion

However, to make this case more solid, it is necessary to understand why the Nenets language does not use the passive voice like its neighbours.

It is important to find out which structural and pragmatic features of Nenets differ from those of Nganasan and Enets and what means Nenets uses to govern its information structure.

However, this is still on my To-Do list as I have not yet reached this knowledge.

I will be happy to hear you suggestions on what might play an important role in this scenario!

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