

# Kildin Saami inchoative constructions and their polysemy

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# Introducing ourselves and our data

- Higher School of Economics (Moscow);
- Kildin Saami language, severely endangered, about 100 speakers;
- Two expeditions in 2022;
- Elicitation;
- 7 consultants: speakers of Voronino (2), Lovozero (2), Chudzyavr (2) and Kildin (1) dialects.

# Inchoative markers

Ways to convey inchoative meaning in Kildin Saami:

- inchoative suffix *-škued'd'*-,
- anticausative-inchoative suffix *-j-*,
- verb *al'l'ke* 'to begin',
- verb *oalkxe* 'to begin'.

## Compatibility of -škued'd'- and al'l'ke

In the past tense both -škued'd'- and al'l'ke have inchoative semantics.

In most cases they are interchangeable. But for verbs with low agentivity -škued'd'- is way more preferable:

- (1) a.    s'av'v'n-eškuud'-e  
         become\_dark-inch-pst.3sg
- b.    %el'g-e                    s'av'v'n-e  
         begin-pst.3sg        become\_dark-inf  
         'It started to become dark (about evening).'

## Compatibility of -škued'd'- and al'l'ke

- (2) a.    *mar'r'j*            **šoabbš-eškuud'-e**    *saam'*    *kiil*  
          mary.nom.sg love-inch-pst.3sg        saami    language.acc.sg
- b.    *\*mar'r'j*            **el'ge**                    **šoabbš-e**    *saam'*    *kiil*  
          mary.nom.sg begin-pst.3sg        love-inf        saami    language.acc.sg  
          'Mary began to love Saami language.'

## Compatibility of -škued'd'- and al'l'ke

The verb *ropxušše* 'to work' can be used with both animate and inanimate subjects.

Which inchoative marker is more preferable depends on the subject.

- (2) a.    *murrt-j-a*                      *t'el'ev'izar*                      ***ropxušš-eškuud-e***  
         break-antic-ptcp.pst    tv\_set.nom.sg            work-inch-pst.3sg
- b.    *\*murrt-j-a*                      *t'el'ev'izar*                      ***el'g-e***                      ***ropxušš-e***  
         break-antic-ptcp.pst    tv\_set.nom.sg            begin-pst.3sg            work-inf  
         'The broken TV started to work (again).'

## Compatibility of -škued'd'- and al'l'ke

When the subject of *robxušše* is animate, both -škued'd'- and *al'l'ke* can be used, but *al'l'ke* seems to be more natural for the Kildin speakers.

- (3) a.    <sup>1</sup>*vas's'k*                      ***el'g-e***                      ***ropxušš-e***  
          vasya.nom.sg            begin-pst.3sg            work-inf
- b.    <sup>OK</sup>*vas's'k*                      ***ropxušš-eškuud-e***  
          vasya.nom.sg            work-inch-pst.3sg  
          ‘Vasya started working.’

## Anticausative-inchoative suffix *-j-*

*-j-* has several possible meanings. Usually it is anticausative:

- (4) *vas'k*            *kir'r'j*            *koavvn-ej*  
vasya.gen.sg book.nom.sg find-decaus.pst.3sg  
'Vasya's book has been found.'



# Anticausative-inchoative suffix -j-

-j- can also be used as inchoative, but for a limited number of verbs. These verbs are not transitive and also have low agentivity.

- (5) *per̥rt*                      *puel'l'-ej*  
house.nom.sg      burn-decaus.pst.3sg  
'The house began to burn.'

It seems that in general its semantics is similar to its North Saami cognate described in (Julien 2015).

This kind of anticausative-inchoative polysemy is not unique to Saami. Suffixes with similar semantics were described for Moksha (Kozlov et al. 2016) and Lithuanian (Arkadiev 2010).

## *al'l'ke* and *oalkxe*

Proto Saami stem with the meaning ‘to begin’ is reconstructed as *\*ālkē* (Lehtiranta 1989: 14).

In Kildin Saami words with this combination of Proto Saami vowels should have *aa* in the first syllable, like *\*vāltē > vaal'l't-e* ‘take-inf’, *voal't-e* ‘take-pst.3sg’.

But Kildin Saami *al'l'ke* has *a* instead, which alternates with *e*.

In general *al'l'ke* is conjugated as if it had *\*ę* in the Proto Saami stem, similar to the verb *\*ęntē > an'n't-e* ‘give-inf’, *en'd-e* ‘give-pst-3sg’.

On the other hand diphthong *oa* in *oalkxe* could only be derived from the Proto Saami *\*ā*.

## *al'l'ke* and *oalkxe*

This inconsistency only exists in Kildin (data for other Saami languages is from (Lehtiranta 1989)).

	'begin'	'take'	'give'
Proto Saami	<i>*ālkē-</i>	<i>*vāltē-</i>	<i>*ęntē-</i>
South Saami	<i>aalg'edh</i>	<i>vaald'edh</i>	<i>vādd'edh</i>
Ume Saami	<i>àl'geet</i>	<i>vālldeet</i>	<i>vad'deet</i>
Pite Saami	<i>aal'kiet</i>	<i>vaal'tiet</i>	<i>vattiet</i>
North Saami	<i>al'get</i>	<i>val'det</i>	<i>âd'det</i>
Inari Saami	<i>älgid̥</i>	<i>väldid̥</i>	<i>aded̥</i>
Skolt Saami	<i>ä'lgged</i>	<i>vä'ldded</i>	<i>â'dded</i>
Ter Saami	<i>aŋg</i>	<i>vaŋded</i>	<i>eŋded</i>
Kildin Saami	<b><i>al'l'ke</i></b>	<i>vaal'l'te</i>	<i>an'n't-e</i>

## *al'l'ke* and *oalkxe*

As for suffix *-x-* in *oalkxe*, its morphonology strongly suggests that it is derived from the Proto Saami causative *\*-ttē-* (Koponen 2022: 111).

Therefore, it seems that *oalkxe* is a causative derivation of some Saami verb with the meaning ‘to begin’, while the morphophonology of *al'l'ke* is an aberration.

According to (Lehtiranta 1989: 15) and Álgú database, Proto Saami *\*ālkē* is a Baltic Finnic loan and has cognates in the modern Baltic Finnish languages. *al'l'ke* in Kildin could be a result of a repeat loan that replaced the original derivative of *\*ālkē*, while the causative derivation *oalkxe* survived.

## *al'l'ke* and *oalkxe*

Even though it seems that *oalkxe* is not a causative derivation of *al'l'ke*, historically it is a causative derivation of some other verb with the meaning ‘to begin’.

For the aforementioned reasons we have decided to gloss *al'l'ke* as ‘begin’ and *oalkxe* as ‘begin-caus’.

## *al'l'ke* and *oalkxe*

If *oalkxe* is a causative derivation, why does it mean 'to begin' and not 'to cause to begin'? We believe there are several factors at work.

- Types of dependents;
- Grammaticalization of *al'l'ke* into a future time reference marker;
- Influence of Russian language.

## *al'l'ke* and *oalkxe* dependents in comparison to North Sami

According to (Julien 2013), North Saami *álgit* 'to begin' can either take a verbal complement (6) or just a nominal dependent (7).

- (6) *elle álggii barggu ohcat Norggas*  
elle begin.past.3sg work.acc look\_for.inf norway.loc  
'Elle began looking for work in Norway.' [Julien 2013: 29]

- (7) *oaggun-gilvu álggii diibmu ovttas*  
fishing-competition.nom begin.past.3sg hour one.loc  
'The fishing competition began at one o'clock.' [Julien 2013: 35]

## *al'l'ke* and *oalkxe* dependents in comparison to North Sami

Unlike North Saami *álgit*, infinitive dependents are mandatory for Kildin Saami *al'l'ke*: it cannot be used in sentences similar to (7). Instead, a combination of causative and passive suffixes is required.

- (8) a.    *\*urehk*                      ***allk***                      *ahc*                      *čas-es't'*  
         lesson.nom.sg    begin.npst.3sg    nine                      hour-loc.sg
- b.    *urehk*                      ***oalk-x-uvv***                      *ahc*                      *čas-es't'*  
         lesson.nom.sg    begin-caus-pass.npst.3sg    nine                      hour-loc.sg
- 'The lesson begins at nine o'clock.'



## *al'l'ke* and *oalkxe* dependents in comparison to North Sami

In North Saami, causative derivation from *álgit* is not possible when it has verbal complement:

- (9) a.     *sii*            ***álge***                            ***heivehit***            *boazo-logu*  
         they        begin.past.3pl        adjust.inf        reindeer-number.acc  
         ‘They began to adjust the number of reindeer.’

- b.     \**eiseválddit*            ***álgga-hedje***                            *sin*            ***heivehit***  
         authority.pl.nom    begin-caus.past.3pl        them        adjust.inf  
         *boazo-logu*  
         reindeer-number.acc

Expected meaning: ‘The authorities made them begin to adjust the number of reindeer.’ [Julien 2013: 33]

## *al'l'ke* and *oalkxe* dependents in comparison to North Sami

Similarly, you can't use *oalkxe* as a causative form of *al'l'ke* with verbal dependents:

- (10) *\*jaanna*                      ***oalk-eh***                      *vas'k*                      *ohpnuvv-e*  
mother.dim.nom.sg    begin-caus.pst.3sg    vasya.acc.sg    study-inf  
Expected meaning: 'Mother has made Vasya to start studying.'

## *al'l'ke* and *oalkxe* dependents in comparison to North Sami

In North Saami causative derivation from *álgit* is possible when it has only nominal dependents:

- (11) *eiseválddit*                      ***álgga-h-edje***                      *boazo-logu*                      *heiveheami*  
authority.pl.nom      begin-caus-past.3pl reindeer-number.gen      adjustment.acc  
'The authorities initiated the adjustment of the number of reindeer.' [Julien 2013:36]

Moreover, in this case it's possible to modify it further with a passive suffix:

- (12) *Kursa*                      ***álgga-h-uvvo***                      *ihttin*                      *Guovdageainnus*  
course.nom      begin-caus-pass.pres.3sg      tomorrow guovdageaidnu.loc  
'The course is being started tomorrow in Guovdageaidnu.' [Julien 2013:36]

## *al'l'ke* and *oalkxe* dependents in comparison to North Sami

In Kildin Saami *oalkxe* is perfectly fine in contexts similar to (11).

- (13) *učitel'*                      ***oalk-ehť***                      *urek*  
teacher.nom.sg    begin-caus.pst.3sg    lesson.acc.sg  
'The teacher began the lesson.'

This means that although *al'l'ke* can't be used with just nominal dependents, *oalkxe* still functions as a causative from this meaning of *al'l'ke*.

## *al'l'ke* and *oalkxe* dependents in comparison to North Sami

Finally, *oalkxe* can be used without accusative dependent and without causative meaning.

(14) <i>pedar</i>	<b><i>olk-eht</i></b>	<i>ropxušš-e</i>
petya.nom.sg	begin-caus.pst.3sg	work-inf
'Petya began to work.'		

	'to begin' with infinitive dependent (and no accusative)	'to begin' with nominal dependents	'to begin' with accusative
North Saami <i>álgit</i> (6), (7)	+	+	-
North Saami <i>álgahit</i> (9), (11)	-	-	+
North Saami <i>álggahuvvot</i> (12)	-	+	-
Kildin Saami <i>al'l'ke</i>	+	-	-
Kildin Saami <i>oalkxe</i> (10), (13)	+	-	+
Kildin Saami <i>oalkxuvve</i> (8)	-	+	-

## Differences between *al'l'ke* and *oalkxe* in the past tense

While both *al'l'ke* and *oalkxe* mean ‘to begin’, there is a semantic difference between them:

(15) <i>pedar</i>	<b><i>el'g-e</i></b>	<b><i>ropxušš-e</i></b>
<i>petya.nom.sg</i>	<i>begin-pst.3sg</i>	<i>work-inf</i>
‘Petya began to work.’		

According to Kildin speakers, this sentence merely means that Peter started working at some point in time: e.g. he worked yesterday and started working again today.

## Differences between *al'l'ke* and *oalkxe* in the past tense

(16) *pedar*                      ***olk-ehť***                      ***ropxušš-e***  
petya.nom.sg      начать-caus.pst.3sg      работать-inf  
'Petya began to work.'

This sentence, on the other hand, highlights some contrast between the newly started situation and what happened before. Maybe Peter had never worked before in his life or maybe he refused to work for quite some time and now started working again.



## Differences between *al'l'ke* and *oalkxe* in the past tense

**Mary sews a jacket every day in the evening. Today she began sewing at 5PM.**

- (17) a. *mar'r'j*                      *el'g-e*                      *koarr-e*                      *kurtek'*  
mary.nom.sg                      begin-pst.3sg                      sew-inf                      jacket.acc.sg
- b. \**mar'r'j*                      *oalk-ehť*                      *koarr-e*                      *kurtek'*  
mary.nom.sg                      begin-caus.pst.3sg                      sew-inf                      jacket.acc.sg  
'Mary started sewing a jacket.'

**Yesterday Mary finished sewing a shirt, and today she began sewing a jacket:**

- (18) *mar'r'j*                      *oalk-ehť*                      *koarr-e*                      *kurtek'*  
mary.nom.sg                      begin-caus.pst.3sg                      sew-inf                      jacket.acc.sg  
'Mary started sewing a jacket.'

## *al'l'ke* and *oalkxe* in the scope of negation

(19) *sonn*      ***ejj***                      ***alk-(m)a***                      ***činn-e***              *p'eerk*  
3sg.nom neg.3sg              begin-cng.pst                      prepare-inf      food.acc.sg  
'S/he stopped cooking.' ('She began not cooking.')

(20) *sonn*              (*v'aal*)      ***ejj***              ***oalk-x-a***                      *činn-e*              *p'eerk*  
3sg.nom              yet              neg.3sg      begin-caus-cng.pst              prepare-inf      food.acc.sg  
'She didn't begin cooking (yet).'

## Other suffixes?

There are several other suffixes that in some cases can have inchoative meaning.

-/- is a default way to denote the beginning of a motion. According to (), the same is true for North Saami.

(21) *paarrne*      *v'ijž'-l-en'*      *školn'-e*  
boy.nom.pl    run-sub-pst.3sg    school-dat.sg  
'Children rushed to the school.'

For some verbs suffix *-st-* is sometimes an option.

But, unlike *-škued'd'-*, these suffixes have a broader meaning.

Future time reference  
of *al'l'ke* and *-škued'd'-*

## Data of existing studies

(Kuruč 1985) – “complex future” which consists of the auxiliary verb *a'l'ke* (carrying a person.number marker) and an infinitive of the main verb:

(21) *sonn      allk                      vaan'n'c-e    toge*  
      3sg.nom begin.npst.3sg    walk-inf        there  
      ‘He will go there.’ (a future habitual meaning)

(Rießler 2022) – the construction “*a'l'ke* + infinitive” “likely carries a modal meaning and is therefore not truly a grammaticalized tense”.

No data on future time reference of the suffix *-škued'd'-*.

## “*al'l'ke* + infinitive” construction

Imperfective future:

**What will your brother do when we arrive, do you think?**

(22) *sonn*      *allk*                      *kir'jx-e*              *kir'j-et'*  
3sg.nom begin.npst.3sg      write-inf              letter-acc.pl  
'He will be writing letters.'

**Talking about the speaker's immediate plans:**

(23) *mun*      *alg-a*                      *roobxušš-e*      *sad-es*  
1sg.nom begin-npst.1sg      work-inf              garden-loc.sg  
'I will be working in the garden.'

## Suffix -škued'd'-

Imperfective future:

(24) *mun* **šobš-eškuad-a** *toon* *soar'm* *rajja*  
1sg.nom love-inch-npst.1sg 2sg.acc death.gen.sg before  
'I will love you till I die.'

(25) *janda* *mijj* **lihk-eškued'd'-ep** *kaaxxc* *čas* *rajja*  
tomorrow 1pl.nom do-inch-npst.1pl eight hour.gen.sg before  
'Tomorrow we will be working till eight o'clock.'

# Interchangeability

- (26) a. *sonn      allk                      kir'jx-e   kir'j-et'              kuhtčas*  
3sg.nom begin.npst.3sg    write-inf letter-acc.pl   two hour.gen.sg
- b. *sonn      kir'jx-eškuadd              kir'j-et'              kuht      čas*  
3sg.nom write-inch.npst.3sg    letter-acc.pl   two      hour.gen.sg  
'He will be writing letters for two hours.'



# Interchangeability (iterative contexts)

**Previously the train departed at four o'clock, but...**

- (27) a.    *tenna*            *maan-es*        *pojezd*            *allk*                    *joadd-l-e /*  
              this.loc.sg    month-loc.sg train.nom.sg begin.npst.3sg    drive-hab-inf  
              *allk*                    *joad'd'-e*        *kudd*        čas-es  
              begin.npst.3sg    drive-inf        six        hour-loc.sg
- b.    *tenna*            *maan-es*        *pojezd*            *joadd-s-ell-eškuadd /*  
              this.loc.sg    month-loc.sg train.nom.sg drive-pfv-hab-inch.npst.3sg  
              *joadd-l-eškuadd*                    *kudd*        čas-es  
              drive-hab-inch.npst.3sg    six        hour-loc.sg  
              ‘...in the next month the train will depart at six o’clock.’

# Uninterchangeability

- (28) a. *mun* *laavv*-*e* *laav*-*a* *i* *alg*-*a* *laavv*-*e*  
1sg.nom sing-pst.1sg sing-npst.1sg and begin-npst.1sg sing-inf
- b. \**mun* *laavv*-*e* *laav*-*a* *i* *laavv*-*eškuad*-*a*  
1sg.nom sing-pst.1sg sing-npst.1sg and sing-inch-npst.1sg  
'I was singing, I am singing and I will be singing.'

## Under negation

Under negation *-škued'd'* seems to mean the full termination of a situation:

**The boy reads very little now.**

- (29) a. *ig'*                    *maŋŋa*   *sonn*    *ejj*            *al'k*                    *loogg-e*  
year.gen.sg   after        3sg.nom neg.3sg   begin.npst.cng    read-inf  
'He won't read after a year (but maybe he will read some time later).'
- b. *ig'*                    *maŋŋa*   *sonn*    *ejj*            *loogg-eškued'*  
year.gen.sg   after        3sg.nom neg.3sg   read-inch.npst.cng  
'He will completely cease reading in a year.'

# Under negation

And also negation of the beginning of a situation:

**I don't love this man now...**

(30) a. *ja n'ikues's' emm al'k soon špbš-e*  
and never neg.1sg begin.npst.cng 3sg.acc love-inf  
'...and I will never love him.'

b. *ja n'ikues's' sonn emm špbš-eškued'*  
и never 3sg.acc neg.1sg love-inch.npst.cng  
'...and I will never fall in love with him.'

# Inanimate subjects

With inanimate subjects -*škued'd'*- may retain its inchoative semantics:

- (31) a. *t'el'ev'izer*                      *allk*                      *kug'g'*                      *roobxušš-e*  
television.nom.sg begin.npst.3sg    long.time    work-inf  
'The television will work for a long time.'
- b. *t'el'ev'izer*                      (\**kug'g'*)                      *roobxušš-eškuadd*  
television.nom.sg long.time    work-inch.npst.3sg  
'(Expected meaning) The television will work for a long time.'  
'# The television will start working.'

# Agentivity

In contexts of low agentivity -škued'd'- is more preferable than *al'l'ke*:

**I heard a funny story the other day. When you hear it, ...**

- (32) a. *ʔtonn* ***alk-ax*** ***s'iijj-e***  
 2sg.nom begin-npst.2sg laugh-inf  
 '...you will be laughing.'
- b. *tonn* ***s'iijj-eškquad-ax***  
 2sg.nom laugh-inch-npst.2sg  
 '...you will laugh.'

**When I come home this evening, ...**

- (33) a. *ʔmun* *jaann-a* ***alk*** ***roamm-š-edd-e***  
 1sg.gen mother.nom.sg-poss1 begin.npst.3sg joy-vblz-retl-inf  
 '...my mother will be happy.'
- b. *mün* *jaann-a* ***roamm-š-eškquad***  
 1sg.gen mother.nom.sg-poss1 joy-vblz-inch.npst.3sg  
 '...my mother will be happy.'

# Future taxis

In taxis contexts -škued'd'- retains its accent on the beginning of a situation:

- (34) a. *kues's' tonn puad-ax janda iinca munn*  
when 2sg.nom come-npst.2sg tomorrow morning 1sg.nom  
***alg-a vued'd'-e***  
begin-npst.1sg sleep-inf  
'When you come to me tomorrow, I will be sleeping.'
- b. *kues's' tonn puad-ax janda iinca munn*  
when 2sg.nom come-npst.2sg tomorrow morning 1sg.nom  
***vued'd'-eškuad-a***  
sleep-inch-npst.1sg  
'When you come to me tomorrow, I will fall asleep.'

# Idiolectic variation

Sometimes some other semantic shades can also be found for *-škued'd'* in the speech of some of the native speakers:

- “Immediate future” (Chudzyavr dialect);
- Reduced assertiveness (Kildin dialect).

*al'l'ke* does not show any variation.



## *al'l'ke* и *-škued'd'-*

	<i>al'l'ke</i>	<i>-škued'd'-</i>
Imperfective future	Yes	Yes
Iterative context	Yes	Yes
Under negation	Negation of a situation as a whole	“To start not working” or “to not start working”
Agentivity	Higher	Lower
Future time reference with inanimate subjects	Yes	No (retains its inchoative semantics)

## Intermediate conclusions

- *al'l'ke* и *-škued'd'*- may be used as markers of imperfective future;
- In fact, *al'l'ke* is highly productive and appears to be the only marker of imperfective future;
- *al'l'ke* is further on the grammaticalization path to a future tense marker than *-škued'd'*- is.

## Differences between *al'l'ke* and *oalkxe*

Unlike *al'l'ke*, *oalkxe* always has inchoative meaning in the nonpast tense.

- (35) *mun*n      ***oalk-x-a***                      *p'eerk*              ***č'inn-e***              *kuhtčas-es'*  
1sg.nom begin-caus-npst.1sg    food.acc.sg    prepare-inf    two hour-loc.sg  
'I'll start cooking at two o'clock.'

It's possible that *oalkxe* has started to cover a larger amount of contexts as a result of *al'l'ke* and *-škued'd'* losing their inchoative semantics.

# Russian Influence?

Russian *načat'* and *načat's'a*.

(36) On ***načal*** *p'isat'*<sub>inf</sub> *p'is'mo*  
'He began writing a letter.'

(37) *uč'itel'* ***načal*** *urok*<sub>acc</sub>  
'The teacher began the lesson.'

(38) \**urok načal*  
*urok načals'a*  
'The lesson started.'

# Russian Influence?

	'to begin' with infinitival dependent	Intransitive begin' 'to	'to begin' with accusative dependent	Future time reference
North Saami <i>álgit</i>	+	+	-	-
North Saami <i>álgahit</i>	-	-	+	-
North Saami <i>álggahuvvot</i>	-	+	-	-
Kildin Saami <i>al'l'ke</i>	+ (pst)	-	-	+ (npst)
Kildin Saami <i>oalkxe</i>	+	-	+	-
Kildin Saami <i>oalkxuvve</i>	-	+	-	-
Russian <i>načat'</i>	+	-	+	-
Russian <i>načat's'a</i>	-	+	-	-

# Conclusions

There is a variety of inchoative constructions which are not completely interchangeable:

- *-j-* behaves similarly to its cognates in other Saami languages;
- *al'l'ke* and *-škued'd'* have acquired future time reference semantics;
- *oalkxe* as a pure inchoative without causative meaning seems to be an innovation of Kildin Saami.

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Thank you for your attention!