



# RELATIVE CLAUSES IN THE LANGUAGES OF SAKHALIN AS AN AREAL FEATURE

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This paper is concerned with the structure of relative clauses in the indigenous languages spoken on Sakhalin Island. The Tungusic languages of the region employ relative clauses of the North Asian type, which are prenominal and have nominalized forms as their predicates. In Nivkh, relative clauses are prenominal as well, but their predicates do not demonstrate any signs of nominalization. Other notable distinctions between the languages include the means of expressing connection between the relative clause predicate and the modified noun, and the use of secondary relativization strategies. The study shows, however, that the languages of Sakhalin have also developed some important similarities, which can be explained by the influence of language contact and should be regarded as areal features.

Данная статья посвящена особенностям относительных предложений в языках коренных народов Сахалина. Для тунгусо-маньчжурских языков, представленных на острове, характерны относительные конструкции североазиатского типа, которые предшествуют определяемому имени и используют в качестве предиката номинализованную глагольную форму. Нивхские относительные обороты также предшествуют вершине, однако их предикаты не демонстрируют никаких признаков номинализации. К другим различиям между языками относятся способы выражения связи между предикатом относительного оборота и определяемым именем, а также использование добавочных стратегий релятивизации. Исследование, впрочем, показывает, что языки народов Сахалина развили и ряд существенных сходств, которые можно объяснить контактным влиянием и следует рассматривать как ареальные черты.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The languages of Siberia are known to share a significant number of phonological, morphological, and syntactic features that are not logically or typologically connected. Based on this fact, Anderson (2006) suggested that these languages should be regarded as forming a linguistic area. Most languages on the list belong to either the proposed Altaic family (Mongolic, Turkic, and Tungusic) or the Uralic family (Ob-Ugric and Samoyedic), but they also include several Eskaleutic

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(Eskimo-Aleut) languages and a group of small families and isolates commonly referred to as Palaeo-Siberian, namely, Kamchukotic (Chukchee-Kamchadal), Yeniseic, and Yukaghiric, as well as Nivkh (Anderson 2006: 266).

This paper is concerned with four of the above mentioned languages, which, apart from belonging to one linguistic area, have also been in mutual contact for a fairly long time. These are the indigenous languages spoken on Sakhalin Island. Three are Tungusic, with Ewenki representing the Northern Tungusic branch and Uilta and Nanai belonging to the Southern Tungusic branch (Georg 2004), while the Nivkh varieties constitute a small language family of their own. The speakers of these languages on Sakhalin, according to the 2010 Russian census (VPN 2010), are few in number: the number of reported speakers was 253 for Nivkh, 14 for Ewenki, 12 for Uilta, and 9 for Nanai. As regards morphological and syntactic properties, all four languages are characterized as having agglutinative morphology, rich case systems and SOV word order, and they largely employ non-finite verb forms in clause-combining.

This paper discusses another Siberian areal feature, namely, prenominal nominalized relative clauses commonly referred to as participial relative clauses (cf. Lehmann 1984; 1986), a type dominant in North Asia (Pakendorf 2012). Prototypical participial relative clauses precede the noun they modify and demonstrate a significant degree of desententialization/nominalization by, for example, imposing restrictions on the verbal categories encoded within a clause, or converting verbal into nominal government (cf. Lehmann 1988). This construction in a highly prototypical form is present in all the three Tungusic languages spoken on Sakhalin and can be illustrated by an example from Uilta (1).<sup>1</sup>

(1) Uilta

[*ulissā minə-č'i-si*]                      *kučən sa*  
meat.ACC cut-PTCP.PST-POSS.2SG    knife where

'Where is the knife with which you have cut the meat?'

1 Unless otherwise specified, the Uilta and Nivkh examples were recorded in 2014 in Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk and Val (Uilta), as well as in Nekrasovka (Nivkh), while the Nanai examples come from my fieldwork materials collected in Khabarovsk Krai (Nanai District, the villages of Naikhin, Dayerga, Dada, and Troitskoe) in 2007 and 2009. It should be noted that although the Nanai data do not come from Nanai speakers living on Sakhalin, they can be expected to be representative of the local dialect, since it is exactly from the Nanai district of Khabarovsk Krai that the Nanai came to Sakhalin after World War II (Avrorin 1959: 5). The Ewenki data comes from various sources, and all the sentences are classified as representing either Standard Ewenki or Sakhalin Ewenki. These two varieties are known to have some important differences, but unfortunately not much material is available on the latter.

Nivkh relative clauses are also prenominal, and the predicate of the relative clause is desententialized in the sense that it cannot take the so-called indicative marker *-d* (dialectally also *-t*, in the East Sakhalin variety *-d*), which is the most commonly occurring affix on the final verb of a sentence (2).

(2) Nivkh

[ <i>n̄i</i>	<i>tukř-toχ</i>	<i>p' řə</i> ]	<i>+mu</i>	<i>tol</i>	<i>+uʂ-d</i>
1SG	DEM.PROX-DAT	come	+boat	water	+enter-IND

'The boat on which I came here sank.'

However, unlike Tungusic languages, Nivkh employs head-dependent synthesis (marked with + in examples here) as the most common or only way of encoding syntactic relations between constituents of the clause (Mattissen 2003: 1). This property leads to significant differences in the morphosyntactic organization between Nivkh and the other languages.

The main objective of this present study is to define to what extent Nivkh relative clauses conform to the North Asian type characteristic of the other indigenous languages of Sakhalin, as well as to determine the areal features that might be present on the island. In order to do that, several aspects of both Nivkh and Tungusic relative clauses are investigated and discussed from a comparative perspective.

The paper is organized as follows: Section 2 discusses the range of syntactic arguments that can be relativized and the strategies employed for their relativization. Section 3 discusses the verb forms that serve as relative clause predicates. The ways in which the connection between the relative clause and the head noun is expressed are discussed in Section 4. As noted in Anderson (2006: 276), apart from older features shared by the languages of the Siberian linguistic area, these languages also demonstrate some more recently acquired common features, which have emerged under the influence of the socially dominant Russian language. Since these new features are claimed to be especially salient in the domain of complex sentential syntax, Section 5 provides an overview of the peculiarities in the structure of relative clause developed by the Sakhalin languages under Russian influence. Conclusions are summarized in Section 6.

## 2. THE RANGE OF RELATIVIZED ARGUMENTS

The participial verb form serving as a predicate in prototypical prenominal relative clauses is contextually oriented, that is, it is only from the syntactic context that it becomes clear which participant of the situation is relativized (Haspelmath 1994: 154). For instance, in Nanai one and the same past participial

form *buu-xəm-bi* (give-PTCP.PST-POSS.1SG) can be variously used for direct object relativization (3), indirect object relativization (4), or subject relativization, the only difference being that in the last case the participle does not bear a possessive marker indicating the subject (5).

## (3) Nanai

[*mi sulungu-du buu-xəm-bi*]                      *daysa-wa*  
1SG    Sulungu-DAT    give-PTCP.PST-POSS.1SG    book-ACC

*mi amem-bi niru-xə-ni*  
1SG    father-POSS.1SG    write-PTCP.PST-POSS.3SG

‘My father wrote the book that I gave to Sulungu.’

## (4) Nanai

[*mi daysa-wa buu-xəm-bi*]                      *naondžokan*  
1SG    book-ACC    give-PTCP.PST-POSS.1SG    boy

*mi škola-do-e-wa tačeoči-j*  
1SG    school-DAT-POSS.1SG-OBL    study-PTCP.NPST

‘The boy whom I gave the book goes to my school.’

## (5) Nanai

[*mindu daysa-wa buu-xən*]                      *naondžokan*  
1SG.DAT    book-ACC    give-PTCP.PST    boy

‘the boy who gave me the book’

The range of syntactic arguments that can be relativized using contextually oriented participles in the Tungusic languages is fairly wide. Thus, not only subjects, direct objects, and indirect objects, but also arguments occupying lower positions on the Accessibility Hierarchy (Keenan & Comrie 1977) can be relativized, for instance, locative adverbials (6), and possessors (7).

## (6) Standard Ewenki (Nedjalkov 1997: 36)

*hunat [amin-in dʒuta-dʒari-la-n] dʒu-la i:-re-n*  
girl    father-POSS.3SG    live-PTCP.SIM-LOC-POSS.3SG    house-LOC    enter-NFUT-3SG

‘The girl entered the house in which her father lived.’

## (7) Nanai (Mal'čukov 2008: 221)

[asi-ni            tutuəna    buj-ki-ni]                            mapa  
 wife-POSS.3SG    last.year    die-PTCP.PST-POSS.3SG    old.man  
 'the old man whose wife died last year'

In Nivkh it is also always one and the same form that is used to relativize various syntactic arguments. Moreover, the lack of overt reference to the head noun within the relative clause (that is, the gap strategy)<sup>2</sup> can lead to situations where the sentences with subject and primary object relativization differ from each other only in their internal structure. Thus, in example (8), illustrating subject relativization, the predicate of the relative clause forms a synthetic complex with its object, while in example (9), illustrating primary object relativization, it does not form a complex with the subject.

## (8) Nivkh (Nedjalkov &amp; Otaina 2013: 262)

[ətək +za]            +umgu    ʃ'oxɬ-ʃ  
 father +strike    +woman    be.drunk-IND  
 'The woman who beat father is drunk.'

## (9) Nivkh (Nedjalkov &amp; Otaina 2013: 262)

[ətək za]            +umgu    ʃ'oxɬ-ʃ  
 father strike +woman    be.drunk-IND  
 'The woman beaten by father is drunk.'

The same gap strategy is also employed by Nivkh for the relativization of adverbials denoting place (10) or time (11).

## (10) Nivkh (Nedjalkov &amp; Otaina 2013: 276)

ətək [ʃ'am    lu]            +dəf-toχ    vi-ɖ  
 father shaman    sing    +house-DAT    go-IND  
 'Father went into the house where the shaman sang.'

2 It should be emphasized that in this paper the broad definition of gap strategy is adopted, i.e. this term refers to the strategy in which the relativized argument is not overtly represented within the relative clause (Comrie & Kuteva 2013).

- (11) Nivkh (Nedjalkov & Otaina 2013: 278)

*if* [p'i rayi-r vi] +an +hujv-d  
 3SG REFL move-CVB:NARR:3SG go +year +remember-IND

'He remembered the year when he had moved (to a new place).'

Nedjalkov and Otaina (2013: 274) claim that for the relativization of some arguments the use of the gap strategy is not possible. For instance, in order to relativize an instrumental argument, a converbal form of the transitive verb *i-yr-/kir-/xir-* 'use' in its free form *i-yr-* should be used.<sup>3</sup> By way of illustration, compare an independent clause with an instrumental argument (12) and a sentence where this instrumental argument is relativized (13).

- (12) Nivkh (Nedjalkov & Otaina 2013: 274)

*ñi mu-yr ey-d.*  
 1SG boat-INS return.home-IND

'I set out home by boat.'

- (13) Nivkh (Nedjalkov & Otaina 2013: 275)

[*ñi i-yr-t ey*] +mu hoz-d.  
 1SG 3SG-use-CVB:NARR:1SG return.home +boat sink-IND

'The boat by which I set out for home sank.'

However, according to my data collected in Nekrasovka, instrumental arguments can be relativized using the gap strategy as well (2). As for relativization of the possessor in Nivkh, no data are available in the literature, nor were the informants able to produce any examples. This might mean that possessor relativization is not possible in Nivkh at all, or it might simply indicate the insufficiency of the data. In any case, it can be concluded that the range of syntactic arguments that can be relativized is fairly wide both in the Tungusic languages of Sakhalin and in Nivkh.

### 3. THE VERB FORM

As can be seen from the Uilta, Ewenki, and Nanai examples offered above, the Tungusic languages employ various participles to form relative clauses. These participles show a significant degree of desententialization and nominalization

<sup>3</sup> According to Panfilov (1974: 83), the suffix of the instrumental case *-yr* has actually developed from this verb.

with respect to both their morphological and syntactic properties. For example, in Nanai the tense system of participles is reduced in comparison to the tense system of indicative verbs. The latter distinguish between past, present and future forms, while the former only have a twofold past vs. non-past distinction (Table 1).

Nominalization is also manifested in the encoding of the relative clause subject. Instead of regular verbal person-number markers, participles combine with possessive affixes, thus treating the subject as a possessor. Uilta and Ewenki also demonstrate nominal agreement of participles with modified nouns. This issue is discussed in detail in Section 4. It should be noted that the use of the Tungusic forms that in this paper are referred to as participles is by no means restricted to relative clauses. When accompanied by various case markers, they are also commonly used as predicates of complement clauses (14) and adverbial clauses (15).

Table 1 Indicative and participial forms in Nanai (Avrorin 1961: 101–114)

Tense	Indicative verbs	Participles
Past	<i>dʒobo-ka-∅</i> work-PST-3SG	<i>dʒobo-xa-ni</i> work-PTCP.PST-POSS.3SG
Present	<i>dʒobo-ra-∅</i> work-PRS-3SG	<i>dʒobo-j-ni</i> work-PTCP.NPST-POSS.3SG
Future	<i>dʒobo-za-ra</i> work-FUT-3SG	

(14) Standard Ewenki (Nedjalkov 1997: 24)

*alagumni duku-dʒari-va-n*                      *iče-m*  
teacher write-PTCP.SIM-ACC-POSS.3SG see.NFUT-1SG

‘I see that the teacher is writing.’

(15) Nanai

*siun garpa-j-do-a-ni*                      *semata un-dʒi-ni*  
sun shine-PTCP.NPST-DAT-OBL-POSS.3SG snow melt-PTCP.NPST-POSS.3SG

‘When the sun shines the snow melts.’

Moreover, following the pattern that is very common among the Altaic type languages (Kalinina 2001), the Tungusic languages widely employ nominalized verb forms as predicates in independent clauses (cf. the examples above). As a result, in Nanai texts, according to Avrorin (1961: 65), participles are by far the

most frequent verb forms, comprising 70 per cent of all the predicates in independent and subordinate clauses, while finite verbs constitute only 9 per cent, the remaining 21 per cent being converbs of various types.

Unlike the situation in Tungusic languages, in Nivkh there is no specialized non-finite form of the verb that is used for relative clause predicates. Furthermore, there seem to be hardly any grammatical restrictions on the verbal suffixes that can attach to predicates of relative clauses, contrary to what we would expect from a typological standpoint as an indication of desententialization/nominalization (16–18).

(16) Nivkh (Nedjalkov & Otaina 2013: 260)

[*umgu*    *ɣe-jnə*]    +*dus*  
 woman    take-DES    +meat  
 ‘the meat that the woman wants to buy’

(17) Nivkh (Nedjalkov & Otaina 2013: 260)

[*umgu*    *ɣe-jsu*]            +*dus*  
 woman    take-NEG:USIT    +meat  
 ‘the meat that the woman never buys’

(18) Nivkh (Gruzdeva 1998: 35)

[*i-ñ-nə*]            +*ɣa*  
 3SG-eat-FUT    +animal  
 ‘the animal that will eat (something)’

The only apparent constraint is that the verb form heading the relative clause never combines with the indicative marker *-d* (*-t̚*, *-d*). However, diachronically this restriction cannot be regarded as a proper manifestation of nominalization, since this suffix, which synchronically attaches in most cases to the final verb of a sentence, is originally a nominalizer (Mattissen 2003: 21). It is still used in a wide range of contexts where a nominalized form is expected, such as in complement clauses (19). The verb form with the marker *-d* (*-t̚*, *-d*) can also indicate action nominalization (20) or participant nominalization (21).

(19) Nivkh (East Sakhalin, Gruzdeva 1998: 49)

*řayk*        *čo*        +*ñi-d*        *esqa-d*  
 woman    fish        +eat-IND    not.like-IND  
 ‘The woman does not like to eat fish.’



(20) Nivkh (Panfilov 1965: 225) as cited in Nedjalkov & Otaina (2013: 65)

*maŋkə +ōla-gu huyrəḏ +vo-ḏ uiy-ḏ-ra*  
 be.little +child-PL like.that.one +take-IND be.sinful-IND-FOC

‘It is sinful for little children to take a thing like that.’

(21) Nivkh (Otaïna 1978: 72)

*p‘-rəf-p‘i-ḏ-γu sək morqa-ḏ-γu*  
 REFL-house-be.in-IND-PL all be.alive-IND-PL

‘Those who stayed in their houses are all alive.’

Mattissen (2003: 51) claims that the predicate of relative clauses in Nivkh used to have an overt marker as well, namely, a weak final nasal. This marker, however, was later lost leaving behind only a consonant alternation in the middle of the complex formed by the relative clause predicate and the modified noun.

As the facts presented above suggest, Nivkh seems likely to have had a pattern similar to what is attested in the Tungusic languages, with extensive use of nominalized forms in independent clauses. The difference is, however, that Nivkh did not originally possess an all-purpose nominalized verb form of the Tungusic type that could be used for both complementation and relativization, but had a dedicated noun-modifying form instead.

#### 4. THE RELATIVE CLAUSE AND ITS HEAD NOUN

The prenominal position of relative clauses and the use of participial verb forms as their predicates are features shared by all the three Tungusic languages spoken on Sakhalin. The languages, however, differ considerably as to the degree of agreement they demonstrate between the participle and the modified noun.

As can be seen from all the Nanai examples provided here, Nanai participles never show any agreement with the nouns they modify. In Uilta the picture is slightly more complicated. Thus, according to Ozolinya (2013: 257), participles used attributively show neither number nor case agreement. On the other hand, Petrova (1967: 55) makes a general statement that adjectival modifiers can sometimes take the accusative case marker to agree with the modified noun in the accusative. Ozolinya (2013: 247–248) claims that such agreement is only possible for “proper adjectives with syncretic non-derivative stems”, such as *aja* ‘good’ or *orki(n-)* ‘bad’. However, in my Uilta data the case agreement of participles with

the modified nouns in the accusative is also attested (22), while in other case forms they show no agreement whatsoever (23).<sup>4</sup>

(22) Uilta

[činne siloči-xam-ba-wwi] sundattā  
yesterday fry-PTCP.PST-ACC-POSS.1SG fish.ACC

ninda dəptu-xə-ni  
dog eat-PTCP.PST-POSS.3SG

‘A dog ate the fish that I had fried yesterday.’

(23) Uilta

[bi siʹdu-xam-bi] korda-du  
1SG wash-PTCP.PST-POSS.1SG pan-DAT

anim-bi kakti-xa-ni sundattā  
mother-POSS.1SG fry-PTCP.PST-POSS.3SG fish.ACC

‘Mother fried fish in the pan that I had washed.’

Standard Ewenki, which is based on the southern dialects of the language (Nedjalkov 1997: xxi), demonstrates the highest degree of agreement not only among the Tungusic languages, but also among the languages of the Siberian linguistic area in general (Pakendorf 2012: 257). The participle in this variety agrees with the modified noun in number and all cases (24).

(24) Standard Ewenki (Nedjalkov 1997: 25)

bu iče-re-v [baka-na-l-va-tyŋ] oro-r-vo  
1PL see-NFUT-1PL.EXCL find-PTCP-PL-ACC.DEF-POSS.3PL reindeer-PL-ACC.DEF

‘We saw the reindeer which had been found by them.’

However, according to Bulatova (1999: 32), a peculiar feature of the eastern Ewenki dialects, including the Sakhalin variety, is the lack of case agreement between the adjectival modifier and the modified noun (25).

4. As suggested by John Whitman (pers. comm.), the presence of case agreement in the accusative might be an instance of differential object marking, which is attested in Uilta in the marking of nouns. If so, Uilta has a unique pattern, where the definiteness/specificity of a participant is reflected in the case marking not on the corresponding noun, but on the adnominal modifier agreeing with it. Unfortunately, too little data are available to make any definitive conclusions on the matter.

(25a) Standard Ewenki (Bulatova 1999: 32)

*gugda-l-dū ure-l-dū*  
 high-PL-DAT mountain-PL-DAT  
 ‘in the high mountains’

(25b) Sakhalin Ewenki (Bulatova 1999: 32)

*gugda-l ure-l-dū*  
 high-PL mountain-PL-DAT  
 ‘in the high mountains’

The same agreement pattern in Sakhalin Ewenki holds for participial modifiers as well. In the latter, the participle appears in the unmarked form although the head noun bears an accusative marker (26).

(26) Sakhalin Ewenki  
 (Bulatova 1999: 45, glosses kindly provided by Nadezhda Mamontova)

[*eme-čē*]      *beje-ve*      *beje-mkē-ŋēt-ə-t*  
 come-PTCP,PST    man-ACC    man-VBZ-DEB-E-1PL.INCL  
 ‘We need to test the man who came.’

In Nivkh, as discussed above, the most obvious manifestation of the dependent status of the relative clause is the fact that its predicate, obligatorily occupying the final position, forms a dependent-head complex with the modified noun. Syntactic relations within such a complex can be signalled by various morphophonemic alternations. For instance, although the basic form of the noun *təf* ‘house’ begins with a voiceless plosive /t/, it normally changes into the corresponding voiced segment /d/ when preceded by a relative clause (27 = 10).

(27) Nivkh (Nedjalkov & Otaina 2013: 276)

*ətək*    [*t'am lu*]=*dəf-toχ*      *vi-d*  
 father shaman    sing.PTCP=house-DAT    go-IND  
 ‘Father went into the house where the shaman sang.’

This alternation is claimed by Mattissen (2003: 51) to be a reflex of the lost weak final nasal which previously attached to participial verb forms; it is thus the only non-syntactic indicator of the dependency between the relative clause predicate and the modified noun. However, even this sole indicator of the modifier-head relationship is gradually disappearing in the language of present-day Nivkh speakers. As

reported by Gruzdeva (2015: 161), “in modern Nivkh, the system of morphological alternations has been maintained at the boundaries of morphemes and has collapsed at the boundaries of words, especially in phrases with a modifier and a modified”. Initial consonants of the modified noun in the relative construction either do not alternate at all or alternate unsystematically. Therefore, with respect to morphology and morphophonology, the noun-modifying verb form in modern Nivkh no longer shows dependency on the noun it modifies.

To summarize, when it comes to expressing connection between the relative clause predicate and the modified noun, the languages of Sakhalin demonstrate certain peculiar similarities. Among the Tungusic languages, Nanai does not have any agreement at all, Uilta only exhibits occasional case agreement in the accusative, and even Ewenki, which in its standard variety shows full agreement of the participle with the modified noun, appears to lack case agreement on Sakhalin. The latter fact, it seems, might naturally be explained by the influence of the neighboring languages. At the same time, Nivkh, while undergoing the simplification of its morphophonemic system, has abandoned morphophonemic alternations as a means of forming a construction for adnominal modification. Thus, it can be concluded that in the languages of Sakhalin, even though their starting points were very different, various language-internal processes and contact effects have led to a situation where the dependency between the noun and its modifier is mainly manifested by mere juxtaposition.

## 5. RUSSIAN INFLUENCE

It has been claimed by Comrie (1998: 77–78) that many languages that have been in close contact with a dominant European language tend to develop (especially in their written varieties) the European type of relative clauses employing relative pronouns. For example, this has happened in Ewenki, which normally uses the gap strategy (see Section 2 above). This new type follows the Russian template to such an extent that it employs an interrogative pronoun as the relative pronoun (28). The relative pronoun strategy appears to be present in Uilta as well (29).

(28) Ewenki (Comrie 1998: 78)

*amakān yulədū-wun gūlasag ičəw-rə-n*  
soon in.front-1PL village appear-AOR-3SG

[*anti-wa bu ə-čə-wun sā-rə*]  
which-ACC 1PL NEG-PST-1PL know-CONN

‘Soon in front of us appeared a village which we did not know.’

## (29) Uilta

*xusə puri-l [ɲuj-təj bičixxə tau-čim-bi]*  
 man child-PL who-DIR book.ACC read-PTCP.PST-POSS.1SG  
*karu-čči-či mi-ttəj jābulakkā*  
 pay-PTCP.PST-POSS.3PL 1SG.DIR apple.ACC

‘The boys to whom I was reading a book gave me an apple.’

It is worth noticing that the Russian influence in the example above is obvious not only in the structure of the relative clause, but also in the general word order, which tends to be verb-final in all the Tungusic languages (Anderson 2006: 273), but has here switched to SVO in the main clause while remaining verb-final in the subordinate clause. The use of the relative pronoun strategy in Uilta is not equally common in all syntactic contexts. Naturally, the instances of European-type relative clauses in my data are especially numerous in those cases when there is some factor that might impede the formation of the participial relative clause, such as, for example, negation (30).

## (30) Uilta

*bi duku-taj-wi sinda-xa-ni nari*  
 1SG house-DIR-POSS.1SG come-PTCP.PST-POSS.3SG man  
 [*xamačim-bə xāli=dda ə-ččim-bi it-tə*]  
 which-ACC when=INDEF not.do-PTCP.PST-POSS.1SG see-CONN

‘A man whom I had never seen before came to my house.’

The Uilta examples given above have to be treated with caution, since they were obtained through elicitation and therefore could have been influenced by the Russian stimuli. Nevertheless, they provide valuable evidence as to which pronouns can be resorted to when the native relative clause is for some reason hard to form. These are *ɲuj* ‘who’ and *xamača* ‘which’, and although only the former is strictly animate in Uilta, they both can be used to refer to animate participants.

As shown by Lehmann (1988), nominalized constructions in the world’s languages commonly demonstrate various peculiarities with respect to negation and can impose a prohibition on its expression altogether. The latter is apparently not the case in Uilta, since the sentence (31) is also acceptable, though it might be harder to form for the speakers than the affirmative variant.

## (31) Uilta

[*xāli=dda*    *ə-ččim-bi*                            *it-tə*]            *nari*  
 when=INDEF not.do-PTCP.PST-POSS.1SG    see-CONNEX man  
  
*bi*        *duku-taj-wi*                            *sinda-xa-ni*  
 1SG    house-DIR-POSS.1SG    come-PTCP.PST-POSS.3SG

‘A man whom I had never seen before came to my house.’

Being an endangered language of the Russian Federation, Nivkh also might have been expected to supplement its own relativization strategy with the Russian one, which employs relative pronouns. However, such constructions in Nivkh have not been described in the relevant literature, and no instances of relative pronouns are attested in my Nivkh data. This might, of course, be explained by the insufficiency of the material, but there are also other possible factors.

As reported by Gruzdeva (2000: 132), the general effect of Russian influence on Nivkh is relatively slight as compared with the adjacent Tungusic languages. Linguistically, it is counteracted by the dissimilarity of the grammatical structures of the two languages. Polysynthesis, which Nivkh employs for encoding syntactic relations, appears to be a morphosyntactic organizational principle that is fairly resistant to contact influence, even when it is no longer supported by morphophonemic alternations (cf. Section 4 above). Sociolinguistically, the domination of the Russian language in all spheres of life of the few remaining Nivkh speakers is so drastic that it results in the almost entire rejection of Nivkh as a means of communication rather than in proper linguistic interference.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The languages of Sakhalin – the Tungusic languages on the one hand and Nivkh on the other – are not genetically related. However, the substantial similarities that they demonstrate in their phonology, morphology, and syntax suggest that they can be classified as belonging to the broad Siberian linguistic area. One such feature, which is shared by the languages of North Asia in general, is the presence of prenominal relative clauses of the participial type. The properties of this construction have been discussed earlier for Altaic and Uralic languages, while this present article has focused on the similarities and differences of the corresponding construction in Nivkh, a language that has been in contact with several Tungusic languages for centuries.

Both the Tungusic languages and Nivkh allow the relativization of a wide range of syntactic arguments. In Uilta, Nanai, and Ewenki it is possible to relativize all the positions of the Accessibility Hierarchy up to the possessor, while in Nivkh at least everything up to adverbials can be relativized. It seems that for all the four languages the only native relativization strategy employed nowadays is the gap strategy, although Nivkh has some restrictions in this respect.

The verb forms serving as predicates in relative clauses appear to be desententialized to a certain extent in all the languages of Sakhalin, although the ways in which this is manifested are opposite in Tungusic and Nivkh. In Uilta, Nanai, and Ewenki, relative clauses are formed with participles, which have a reduced tense system, and which combine with various nominal affixes, but are, on the other hand, very commonly used as predicates of independent clauses. In Nivkh relative clause predicates are highly verbal in terms of their ability to take temporal, aspectual and modal markers, but they differ from independent clause predicates in that they never take the indicative marker.

The expression of the connection between the relative clause predicate and the modified noun in the languages of Sakhalin is especially interesting from an areal perspective. In this respect there are some fundamental differences in the original state of affairs between Nivkh and the Tungusic languages, especially Ewenki. The former is a polysynthetic language, and it shows the dependency of the adnominal modifier by treating it as the first element of the nominal complex. The latter employs full case and number agreement as a connecting mechanism. However, due to various internal and external reasons, the two languages have moved significantly towards each other with regard to this feature. Nivkh has undergone a certain amount of attrition of its morphophonemic system, while Sakhalin Ewenki has partly lost agreement, becoming closer to its Southern Tungusic relatives, which demonstrate agreement to a lesser extent.

It should be noted, however, that despite the decrease in the functioning of morphophonemic mechanisms in Nivkh, the domination of polysynthesis in syntax remains fairly stable. Thus, unlike the Tungusic languages of the region, Nivkh apparently has not developed the relative pronoun strategy for relativization, although this is a common consequence of the Russian influence on other minority languages.

To summarize, although relative clauses are prenominal in all the languages of Sakhalin, Nivkh relative clauses cannot be unconditionally classified as belonging to the North Asian type. Unlike the situation in the Tungusic languages, the forms serving as predicates in Nivkh relative clauses are not nominal in their essence. Moreover, they are opposed to nominalized forms in the language

system. On the other hand, the languages of Sakhalin do show certain convergence with respect to the relative clause structure. The overall development in the domain of marking dependency of the relative clause predicate on the head noun has led in all the languages to the decrease in overt morphological marking.

## ABBREVIATIONS

1	first person	INDEF	indefinite
2	second person	INS	instrumental
3	third person	LOC	locative
ACC	accusative	NARR	narrative
AOR	aorist	NEG	negative
CONNEG	connegative	NFUT	non-future
CVB	converb	NPST	non-past
DAT	dative	OBL	oblique
DEB	debitive	PL	plural
DEF	definite	POSS	possessive
DEM	demonstrative	PROX	proximal
DES	desiderative	PST	past
DIR	directive	PTCP	participle
E	epenthesis	REFL	reflexive
EXCL	exclusive	SG	singular
FOC	focus	SIM	simultaneous
FUT	future	USIT	usitative
INCL	inclusive	VBZ	verbalizer
IND	indicative		

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