To be or not to be in Veps Reproducing copula loss in stative relational clauses
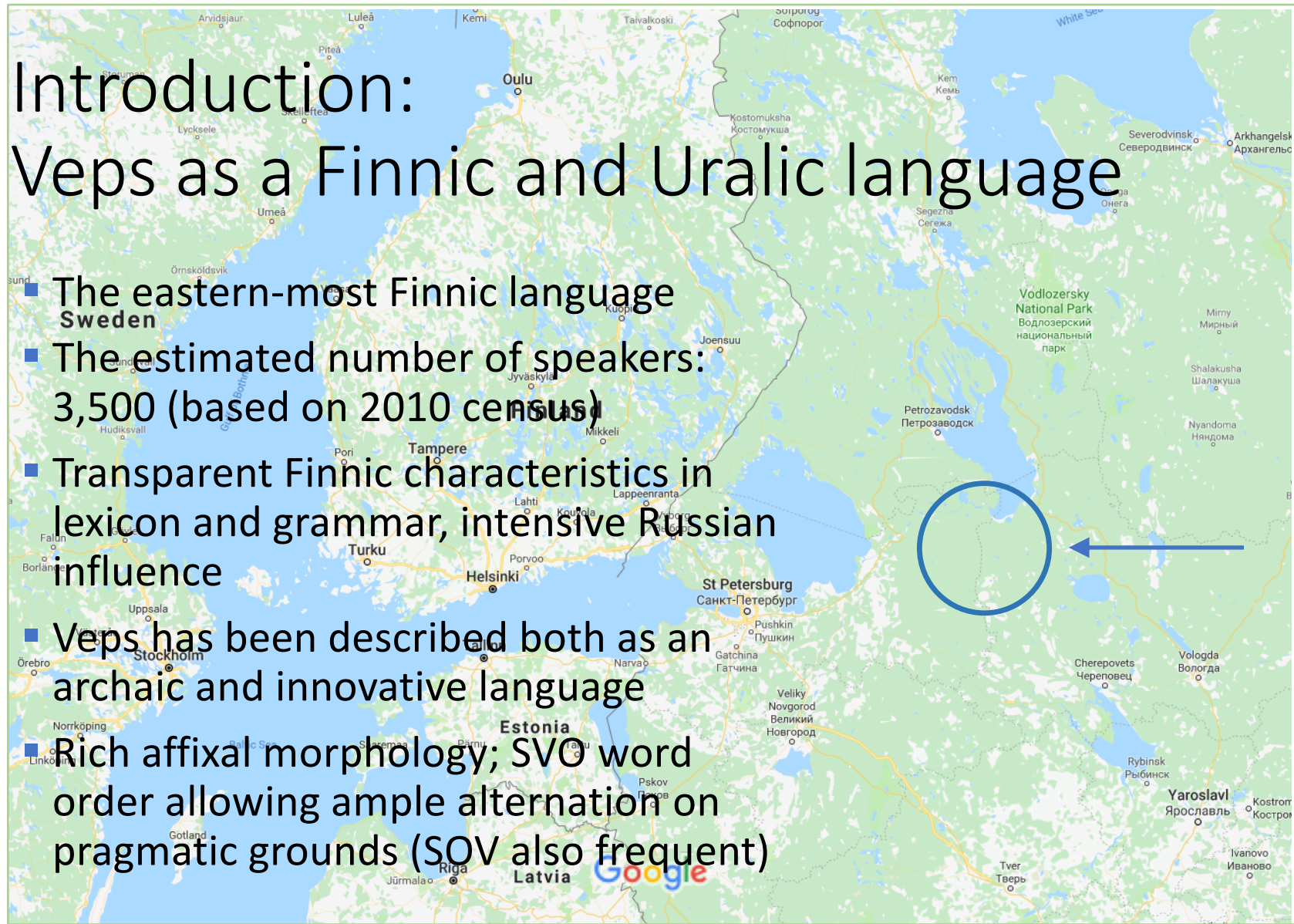
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Descriptive grammars and typology

The challenges of writing grammars of underdescribed and endangered languages

Helsinki, 28 March 2019

Introduction:
Veps as a Finnic and Uralic language

- The eastern-most Finnic language

- The estimated number of speakers: 3,500 (based on 2010 census)

- Transparent Finnic characteristics in lexicon and grammar, intensive Russian influence

- Veps has been described both as an archaic and innovative language

- Rich affixal morphology; SVO word order allowing ample alternation on pragmatic grounds (SOV also frequent)

Veps multilingualism

- Wide-spread bilingualism and language shift in 20th century

- Population decline, economical and political turmoils in Veps-speaking areas

- Long-term language contacts with medieval Slavic and Russian

- Literary standard and new speaker's generation since 1990's

- Female speakers dominating at least since WWII

- Caveat: literary Veps has implemented the same kind of standards that Finnish and Karelian have

- Newspaper and other literary texts and spoken fieldwork data diverge considerably

1. Preamble: Veps stative relational clause from the viewpoint of descriptive grammar

(1) VeN *kaži* **om** *unesīne*
    cat is sleepy
    'The cat **is** sleepy.' (MSFOu 86: 229)

(2) VeC *leib* **om** *küps*
    bread is ripe
    'The bread **is** done.' (MSFOu 86: 229)

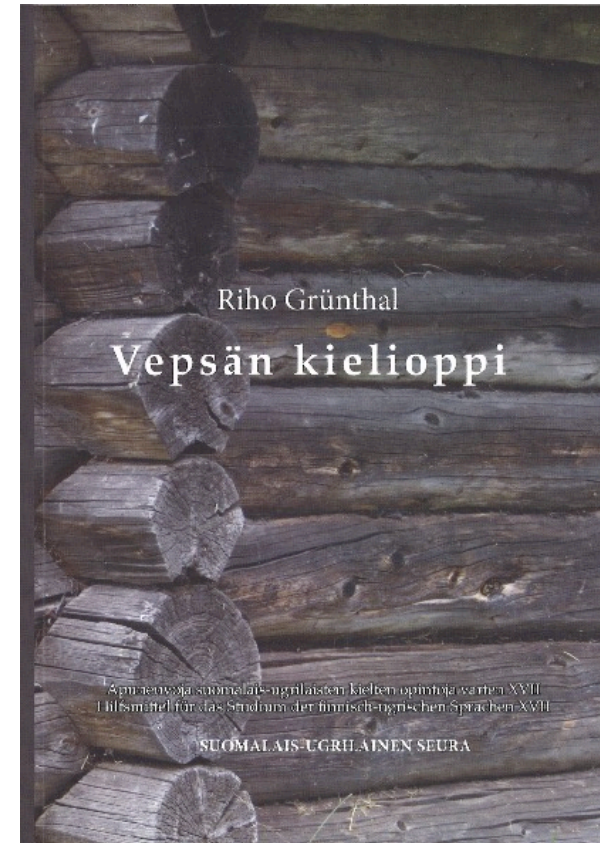(3) VeS *mä igul'ne ükstaho-l'ne*
    I everlasting one.place-ADJ
'I **am** a one-place person.'
[I have always been living in one place.]' (MSFOu 86: 70)

VeS = Southern Veps, VeC = Central Veps, VeN = Northern Veps

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Vepsän kielioppi

Apuneuvoja suomalais-ugrilaisten kielten opintoja varten XVII
Hilfsmittel für das Studium der finnisch-ugrischen Sprachen XVII

SUOMALAIS-UGRILAINEN SEURA

Copula in Veps

- The copula *ol-da* be-INF 'be' is typically lacking in Central and Southern Veps dialects (Kettunen 1943: 74, Joalaid 1998: 59). However, it is used as a tense and person marker in other than present tense.

- The past tense form *ol-i* be-PST 'was' serves as a past tense marker as *li-b* be.FUT-3SG serves as the future tense marker.

- Kettunen (1943: 216): the verb *olda* is lacking due to Russian influence.

This presentation

Prologue: Veps stative relational clause from the viewpoint of descriptive grammar

1. Introduction
2. Stative relational clause in other Finnic and Uralic languages
3. Copula constructions and the stative relational clause in Veps
4. The relevance of the diachronic development for descriptive grammar
5. Copula clause and past tense description in Veps
6. Conclusions: the cycle of grammar

2. Stative relational clause in other Finnic languages

Finnish (copula)

(4) *talo **on** suuri, koira **on** talo-ssa*

house is big, dog is hous-INE

'The house is big, the dog is in the house.'

Votic (copula)

(5) *siä **õlõ-d** iloza, miä **en õõ***

you be-2SG happy I NEG-1SG be.CNG

'You are happy, I am not.'

Estonian (copula)

(6) *tüdruk **on** rõõmus, poiss **ei ole**, ta **on** kodu-s*

girl is happy, boy NEG be.CNG (s)he is home-INE

'The girl is happy, the boy is not, he is at home.'

Livonian (copula)

(7) *jegā-ikš rānda-li **um** kalāmīez*

every-one coastal-ADJ is fisher

'Every Livonian is a fisherman.' (equative)

2. Stative relational clause in other Uralic languages

North Saami (copula)

(8) *Dat **lea-t** buori-t.*

these be-3PL good-PL…

'These **are** good.'

(9) *Máhtte lea stobu-st-is.*

M. is room-LOC-3SG

'M. **is** in his room.'

Erzya (non-copula)

(10) *Kujar vele-s' pokš …*

K. village-DEF big…

'K. village **is** big.'

(11) *ton stol' ekš-s-at*

you.2SG table behind-INE-2SG

'You **are** behind the table.'

Mari (non-copula)

(12) *wüd ser küšny-žö turarak*

water edge up-3SG steep-COMP

'Upwards [the river] the edge of the water **is** steeper.'

2. Stative relational clause in other Uralic languages

Udmurt (non-copula)
(13) *Ta kvartira piči no jugyt.*
this appartment little and bright
'This appartment **is** little and bright.'

Udmurt (existential)
(14) *Tros korka-os no pispu-os **van'**.*
many house-PL and tree-PL COP/EX
'There are many houses and trees.'

Hungarian (non-copula)
(15) *Pista a házigazda.*
P. the host
P. **is** the host.'

Hungarian (existential)
(16) *Kint még meleg nyár **van**.*
out still warm summer COP/EX
'There is still a warm summer outside.'

Nenets (non-copula)
(17) *t'uku° wen'ako-x°h səwa-x°h*
This dog-DU good-3DU
'These two dogs **are/were** good.'
(Nikolayeva 2014: 252)

3. "Stative relation clause"

a) Proper inclusion: *Frieda is a teacher*.

b) Equation: *He is my father*.

c) Attribution: *John is tall*.

d) Location: *The book is on the table*.

e) Existence: *There is a book on the table*.

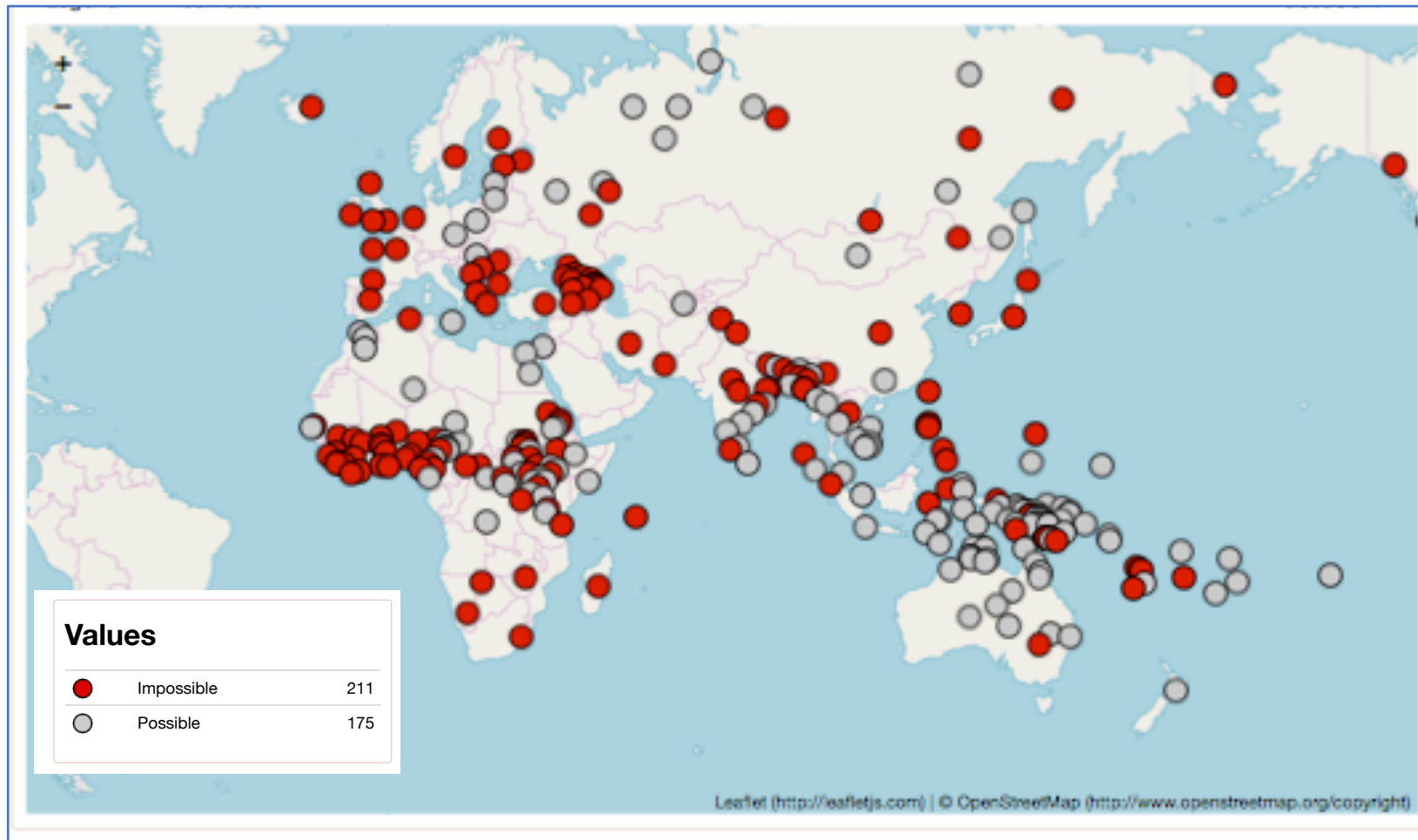f) Possession: *Sally has nineteen cats*. / *The book is John's*.

(Payne 1997: 111–114; Pustet 2005: 29–33; Hamari 2008: 23)

Copula

A copula is a linguistic element which co-occurs with certain lexemes in certain languages when they function as predicate nucleus. A copula does not add any semantic content to the predicate phrase it is contained in. (Pustet 2005: 5)

The main difference between constructions containing a copula and those containing a semi-copula is that the semi-copula can never be left out without changing or affecting the meaning of the resulting construction. In other words, the semi-copula adds an element of meaning to the construction in which it occurs, whereas the copula does not. (Hengeveld 1992: 35; Pustet 2005: 6)

Stassen 2013: Zero Copula for Predicate Nominals

Values

🔴	Impossible	211
⚪	Possible	175

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4. Veps copula: a problem for grammatical description

- Data representing literary language and spoken variants are not uniform.
- Copula clauses and copula-dropping is asymmetrical in Veps dialects.
- Copula-dropping is asymmetrical in different stative relational clause types.

- Preliminary conclusion: The Veps stative relational clause types and related copula constructions are affected by an ongoing change.

Copula vs. non-copula patterns

(18) VeC **om** *kidad om, kidad om lapsil, kidastadas* (exist-poss)
    'is shouting-PART is, shouting-PART is child-PL-ADE, shout-PASS.'
    'There is a lot of shouting, the children are shouting.' (MSFOu 86: 72)

(19) VeN *käzirobeh* **om** *savesīne* (attributive)
    handbolt is clay-ADJ
    'There is clay at/in the handbowl.' (MSFOu 86: 72)

(20) VeC *nece mužik* **om** *tažlak* (attributive)
    'This man is fat.' (MSFOu 86: 75)

(21) VeS **ougat** *mi lindūžed mecas* (equative)
    be-IMP-2PL as bird-PL forest-INE
    'Be as the birds in the forest are!' (MSFOu 86: 80)

Copula vs. non-copula patterns

(22) VeS *jorš se oghakas kala* (attributive)

     ruff it thorny fish

     'Ruff is a thorny fish.' (MSFOu 86: 70)

(23) VeC *meide derevnas vähä norištod* (existential)

     we-GEN village-INE few youth-PART (MSFOu 86: 40)

     'There are a few young people in our village.'

(24) VeS *enzne vezi meres* (locative)

     old water sea-INE

     'The old water is in the sea.' (MSFOu 86: 70)

Copula vs. non-copula patterns

(25) VeS *urus künttä hond ani* (attributive)

hole-INE plough bad very

'It is very bad to plough in a hole.' (MSFOu 86: 43)

(26) VeS *tämbää toižnar'g, tämbää mejaa önik* (equ/poss)

today Tuesday, today we-ADE night-DER

'Today is Tuesday, today we have night guests.' (MSFOu 86: 70)

Copula vs. non-copula patterns: past tense

(27) VeN *pert' mugeine lačak **oli*** (attributive)
      hous such lousy was
      'The house was such a lousy one.' (MSFOu 86: 72)

(28) VeS *mamš **ol'** ani järed* (attributive)
      woman was very thick
      'The woman was very fat.' (MSFOu 86: 74)

(29) VeS *edō mä gol'u **olelīn** humalakaz* (attributive)
      earlier I always be-FREQ-IMPF-1SG drunkard
      'Earlier I always used to be a drunkard.' (MSFOu 86: 74)

Copula vs. non-copula patterns: negation

(30) VeC *mä **en** kirnik, kirjutada ni kut en mahta*

      I NEG-1SG writer write-INF NEG how NEG-1SG can

      'I am not a writer (writing person), I cannot write at all.' (MSFOu 86: 66)

(31) VeS ***ebad** minun d'engad, ortjan*

      NEG-3PL I-GEN money-PL Ortja-GEN

      'That is not my money, it is Ortja's.' (MSFOu 86: 66)

Copula vs. non-copula patterns: negation

(32) VeS *padaane ii sur*

pot NEG big

'The pot is not big.' (MSFOu 86: 76)

(33) VeS *noremb ii hond priha*

young-COMP NEG bad boy

'The younger one is not a bad boy.' (MSFOu 86: 83)

(34) VeC *hii ii venänikad, hii l'udinikad*

they NEG Russian-PL they Vepsian-PL

'They are not Russians, they are Vepsians.' (MSFOu 86: 84)

Copula vs. non-copula patterns: existential clause

(35) VeS *nügüd (kezal)* **oma** *hahkad jänišad a touvol vouktad*

   now (summer-ADE) are grey-PL hare-PL but winter-ADE white-PL

   'At the moment there are grey hares, but in the winter white.'
   (MSFOu 86: 65) (exist)

(36) VeS *tejā* **omad** *kolhozad?* (poss)

   you-ADE are-PL kolkhoze-PL

   'Have you got kolkhozes?' (MSFOu 86: 61)

(37) VeC *järviš* **oma** *kaidused, kaidad sijeižed* (loc-poss)

   lake-PL-INE are sound narrow-PL place-PL

   'There are sounds in lakes, narrow places.' (MSFOu 86: 65)

Negative existential

(38) **ii ole heng-i-š** hän.

    NEG be.CNG spirit-PL-INE (s)he

    '(S)he is not alive.' (Ladv 2006)

(39) mii-le kolhoza-s ka **pasporta-d** ni **ii ole-nd**.

    we-ALL kolkhoz-INE yes passport-PART NEG NEG be-PST-PTCP

    'In the kolkhoz we did not have even a passport.' (Ladv 2006)

Inflecting negative existential

(40) Biržuu mugažno **eole** elä-j-i-d nügude.

Birzh.ADE also NEG.be.3SG live-PTCP-PL-PART now

'Nowadays there are no inhabitants at Birzh either.' (Mäggär'v 2007)

(41) **iile** müi-l-e ni keng-ii-d', **iile** mü-i-le ni sob-ii-d'

NEG.be.3SG we-PL-ALL NEG shoe-PL-PART

'We don't have shoes, we don't have clothes.' (Kettunen 1925: 105)

(42) sö-dä ii m-ida **ol'**, ni sobad **iilend** ni kengad **iilend**

eat-INF NEG what-PART be.PST.3SG NEG cloth-PART NEG.be-PST.PTCP NEG shoe-PART NEG.be-PST.PTCP

'There was nothing to eat, there were no clothes and no shoes.' (Kettunen 1920: 56)

4. The relevance of the diachronic development and language contacts for descriptive grammar

- Secondary copula-dropping in stative relational clauses formally reestablishes the old Uralic pattern, in which copula is not used as a predicating unit connecting coreferential nominal units (S + Attr).

- Copula-dropping does not happen in existential clauses. The use of the verb 'be' corresponds to the use of a similar unit in Russian but also in eastern-more Uralic languages.

- Inherent variation or a contact-induced change?

- The implication of copula-dropping: considerable change takes place in the Veps past tense system, reanalysis of participle-based compound past tenses. Ultimately the change ends in the restructuration of morphological paradigms.

5. Copula vs. non-copula patterns: perfect tense

(43) VeS *jaugad hapanuded, embō* (~ attributive)
      foot-PL rotten-PTCP-PL cannot.1SG
      'My feet **have become** week, I can't.' (MSFOu 86: 76) (~ attr)

(44) VeC *kaik nitud aideidud* (~ attributive)
      all field-PL fence-CAUS-PERF-PL
      'All fields **have** barriers.' (MSFOu 86: 77)

(45) VeC *lähtnud jo amu mecha* (~ processual)
      leave-PTCP already long.ago forest-INE
      '(S)he **has left** to the forest long ago.' (MSFOu 86: 77)

(46) VeS *nece ortjale andet* (~ processual)
      this Ortja-ALL give-PTCP
      'This **has been** given to Ortja.' (MSFOu 86: 77)

5. Copula vs. non-copula patterns: perfect negative

(47) VeC *igas **e-n kuu-nu** ningoš-t, tö **e-t kuu-nuhu-d**?*
      never NEG-1SG hear-PST.PTCP such-PART you.2PL NEG-2PL hear-PST.PTCP-PL
      'I have never heard anything like that, you haven't heard either?' (MSFOu 86: 467)

(48) VeC *ni konz **e-n lug-ńu** kniga-d*
      NEG when NEG-1SG read-PST.PTCP book-PART
      'I have never read a book.' (MSFOu 86: 467)

(49) VeC ***e-n har'ga-nude-d** išt-ma-ha, uni tule-b, heika-stoi-ta-b*
      NEG-1PL get.used-PST.PTCP-PL sit-INF-ILL sleep come-3SG yawn-CONT-CAUS-3SG
      'We are not used to sitting, we become sleepy, we are yawning.' (MSFOu 86: 510)

Bieffects of copula-dropping

- The reanalysis of stative relational clause.

- The reanalysis of participial forms.

- Change in Veps tense system.
  - The loss of compound past tenses. Past tense system approaching the Russian type: FUT / PRES / PAST
  - Fragmentary use of copulaless perfect forms.
  - Copula in existential clauses

- The split of negative copula and negative existential

6. Conclusion 1: the cycle of copula clause in Veps

- Non-copularizing stative relational clause
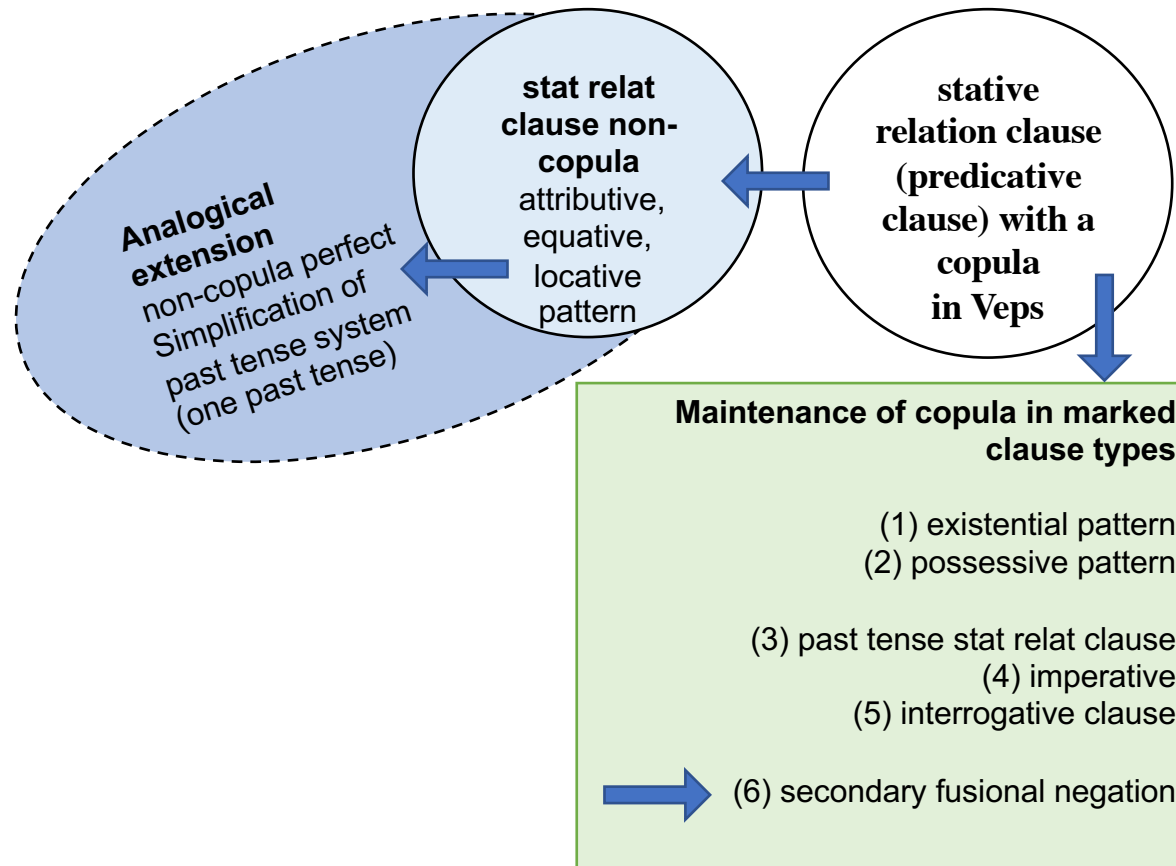- Copula in existential clause types
- Stage: Early Uralic

- Extended use of copula in all stative relational clause types
- Symmetric affirmative and negative clauses
- Stage: Proto-Finnic

- Secondary copula-dropping stative relational clause
- Maintenance of copula in existential and often in possessive and locative clauses
- Stage: Contemporary Veps

Conclusion 2: the reanalysis of copula clauses

stat relat clause non-copula
attributive, equative, locative pattern

stative relation clause (predicative clause) with a copula in Veps

Analogical extension
non-copula perfect
Simplification of past tense system (one past tense)

Maintenance of copula in marked clause types

(1) existential pattern
(2) possessive pattern

(3) past tense stat relat clause
(4) imperative
(5) interrogative clause

(6) secondary fusional negation

Spasib tiile!

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