

Variation and language contact in an underdescribed dialect of North Saami



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A grammar of Čohkkiras North Saami (Saamic, Uralic)

- **Document:** Gather a corpus of spoken language, supplemented by elicitation (currently some 30 hours from 17 speakers)
- **Describe:** Write a typologically informed grammar of North Saami, accessible not only for Saami specialists and Uralicists but also for general linguists
- **Return:** Create lasting documentation for the speech communities

Čohkkiras North Saami



Čohkkiras North Saami

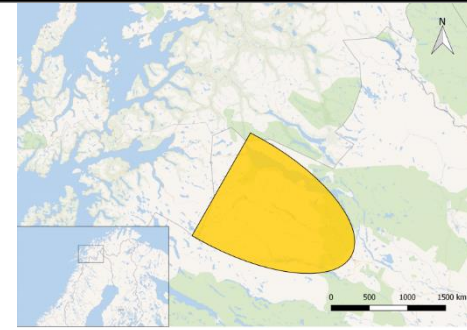
- In the west coterritorial with the majority language Norwegian (North Germanic, Indo-European)
- In the east coterritorial with the majority language Swedish (North Germanic, Indo-European) and the minority language Meänkieli (Finnic, Uralic)
- Differences between east and west in phonology, morphology, lexicon and syntax

Declarative clause

- In both dialects, the neutral word order in a declarative clause is SV

(1) *to* *pocta:h*
 you come.2SG
 S V
 ‘You are coming’ (180918_L1_01) e

Polar questions (east)

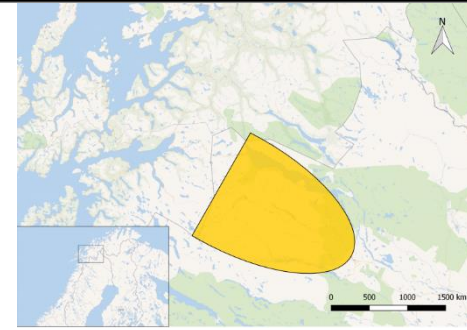


- In the Eastern dialect, polar questions are formed by
 - i) Constituent fronting
 - ii) The addition of a 2nd-position clitic =**ko(s)**

(2)	<i>pocta:h</i>	= ko	<i>to</i>	<i>itiet?</i>
	come.2SG	= Q	you	tomorrow?
	V		S	X

‘Are you coming tomorrow?’ (160511_L1_01) e

Polar questions (east)

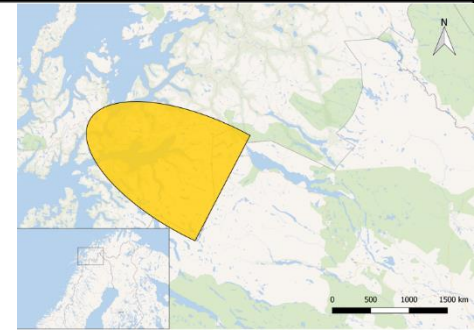


(3) *tuorastaka* =**ko** *ńuovaj*
Thursday.ACC.SG =**Q** slaughter.3SG.PST
X V

kuok:te *nulhpuo?*
two.ACC.SG reindeer_bull_without_antlers.GEN.SG
O O

‘Was it Thursday that he slaughtered two reindeer bulls without antlers?’ (180429_Ga1_L4_01)

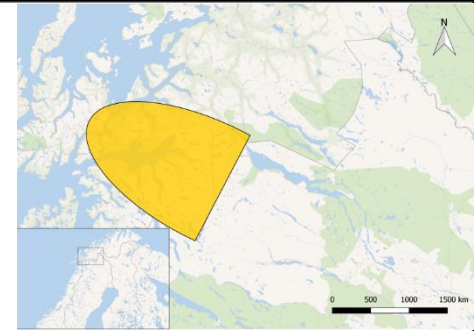
Polar questions (west)



- The question clitic is only attested a few times in the western dialect, and only with the negative auxiliary verb

(5) *ik* =***kos*** *ton* *mana* *sijtij?*
NEG.2SG =Q you go.CNG home
'Why don't you go home?' (160615_S1_01) e

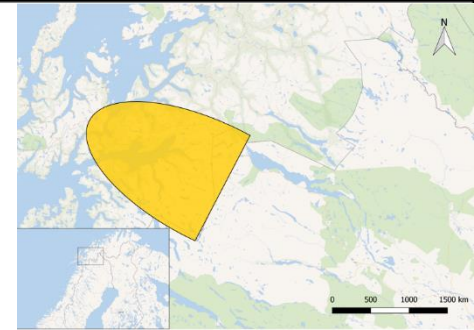
Polar questions (west)



- The default way of forming polar questions is by mere verb fronting

(4) *ma:tta:* *ta* *sa:mie?*
know.3SG.PRS she Saami.ACC.SG
V S O
'Does she know Saami?' (170208_S3_01)

Polar questions (west)



- The mere verb fronting construction is an innovation – older texts feature both constituent fronting and a question clitic

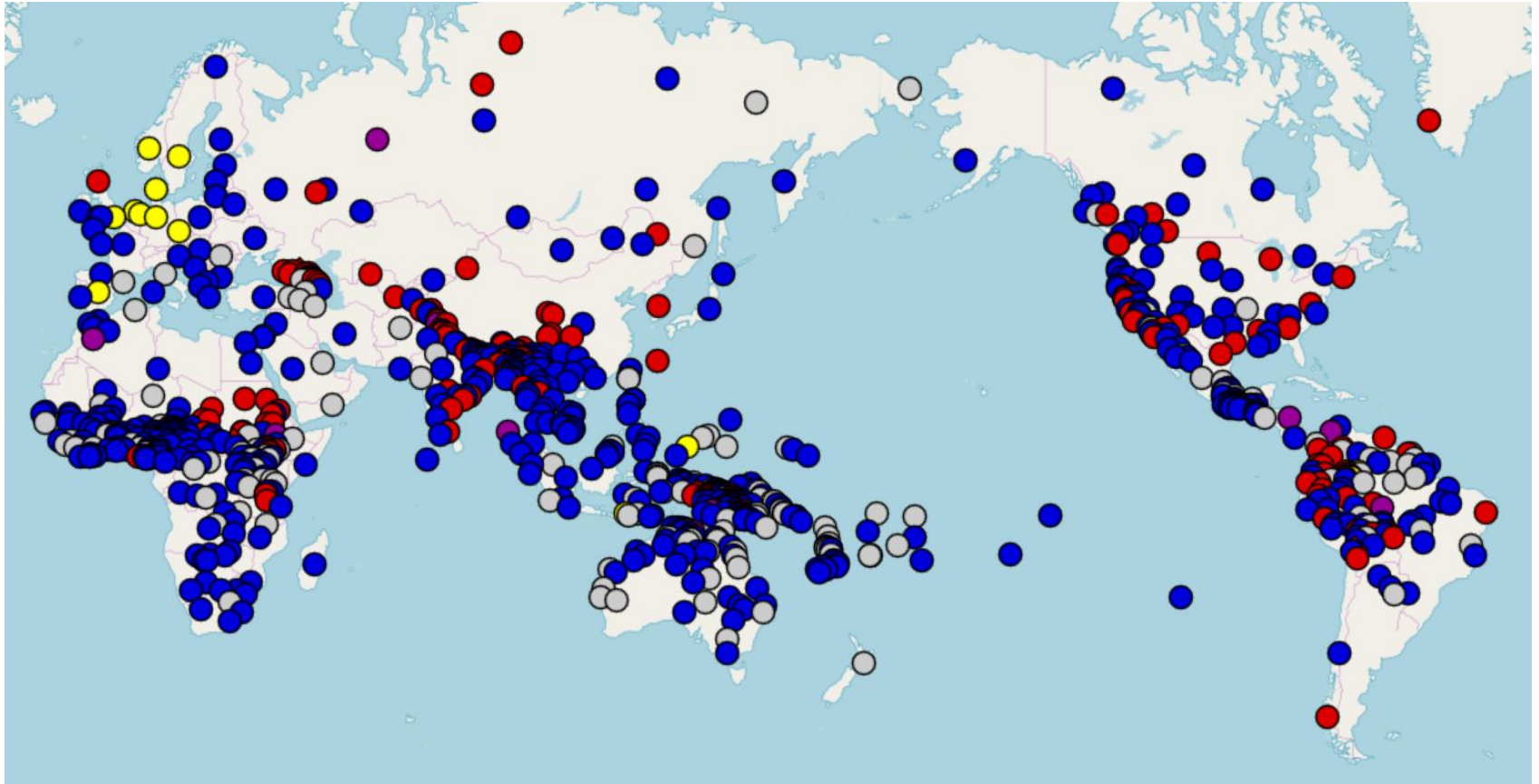
læ bæi've?“ „Juo.“ „Gok'tes don dan doptak?“ „Gol'lerin'go
 galmastalla čuw'tin; čuw'degæžek jossusak læk.“ „Læigus sæn'ga
 lines?“ „I læm, garas læ; il'la mon ija lok'tem.“ Dan Aččečæne
 gɛw'rijen mærragad'dai, vuoddjoden nuorrai.

(Jakobine Jakobsdatter 1885, Ofoten.)

(Qvigstad 1929: 494)



Polar questions



Dryer (2013)

Internal development?

- The loss of the clitic has possibly been facilitated by a number of verb suffixes in *-k* (including the 2sg and 3pl), merging with the unstressed clitic *=ko(s)*

<i>manak=ko</i>	<i>to?</i>	>	<i>manak</i>	<i>to?</i>
<i>go.2SG=Q</i>	<i>you</i>		<i>go.2SG</i>	<i>you</i>

Contact-induced change?

- The majority language Norwegian utilizes verb fronting in polar questions
- The western dialect shows other features that are likely due to Norwegian contact, including the loss of dual number (Kejonen 2017) and extensive use of a habeo-verb, as well as a large number of loanwords
- In the eastern dialect, the question clitic might have been retained due to contact with Meänkieli, which also features a question clitic =*kO(s)*

Summary

- The national border between Sweden and Norway is also a linguistic border
- In the case of polar questions, linguistic variation can likely be explained through language contact
- In drawing closer to the majority language Norwegian, the western subdialect favors a typologically rare way of marking polar questions



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Giitu!
Thank you!

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