Forest Enets descriptive phonology – a little bit of everything Florian Siegl

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1. Segmental inventory 2. Optional palatalization 3. Syllable structure 4. Stress

5. General questions (please read through them before my presentation)

In contrary to its better studied neighbor Tundra Nenets, Forest Enets is in every respect underdocumented. Concerning the sound structure of FE, only two synchronic surveys exist; both as parts of sketch grammars (Prokof'ev 1937, Tereshchenko 1966). Although a couple of other articles deal with FE phonology (e.g. Mikola 1984, Mikola 1996), they are concerned with historical phonology and are not of concern here. A descriptive and comprehensive phonology is currently in preparation for my upcoming PhD dissertation as part of a functional language description (documentary linguistics).

	Labial	Dental	Alveolar	Postalveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Plosive (unvoiced)	p, ṕ		t, t' (?)		č	k, g	"
Plosive (voiced)	b, b'		d, d'				
Nasal	m, ḿ		n, ń			ŋ	
Trill			r, ŕ (?)				
Fricative		ð	s	Š		x	
Approx					j		
Lat-Approx			I, I'				

Consonant inventory¹

Vowel inventory

	Front	Back
High	i	u
Close-mid	е	0
Open-mid	ä	
Low		а

¹ Practical orthography, if marked by diacritic consonant is palatalized

NB Vowel length is distinctive though its functional load is low. Long vowels are restricted to word initial syllables.

1. Segmental inventory

The overall approach chosen operates with the assumption, that palatality is an inherent property of consonants, regardless of their phonetic environment. This approach, then, excludes palatality as a suprasegmental feature of the syllable. Historically, the latter must have been the path for the emergence of palatalized consonants but this rule is no longer productive. Nowadays palatalized consonants are no longer restricted to a phonetic environment with a high or mid front-vowel. The approach which I prefer results in a slightly higher inventory of phonemes, as this leads to the postulations of phonemic contrast for which sound minimal pairs are however lacking so far.

Minimal and sub-minimal pairs

p -	paður	'letter, paper'	ри	'stone'
	ро	ʻyear'		
	<i>þada</i>	'камус'	<i>þišiŋa</i>	'he laughs'
	<i>þeri</i>	ʻalways'	р́а	'tree'
b - b'	bar	édge'	busi	'old man'
	koba	'skin'	aba	'snow goose'
	taðib	ʻshaman'	Potab	'Potapovo'
	b'aði	'metal, money'	b'auða	'enough'
	b'i²	'water'	b'exan	<i>a</i> 'sturgeon'
	b' in co	odas $ ightarrow$ result of morphonologi	cal rule	
m -	moga	'forest'	muð	'liver'
	mal'e	'already'	mud'	'ego'
	sama	'animal'	kamir'	a dead person'
	meju	'new'	mi-n	'inside-LOC PP'

	<i>ḿaði</i>	'wind'		<i>ṁa</i> ²	'chum'	
	<i>ṁar</i>	'quick'		<i>ṁi</i> -	'give'	
t - ?	to		'lake'	tu		'fire'
	teða		'his one reindeer'	tiða ∼ i	tyða	'his many reindeer'
	motu		'six'	itu		'hair'
	ot (otu,)	'smell'	tä		'birch bark'
	te		'reindeer'	tara		'must.3SG'
ť	The ph	nonetic	status of /t'/ is proble	ematic.	It seem	is that /t'/ is either an
	allopho	one of /	d'/ or a quasi-phoner	ne whic	ch eme	rges from assimilation
	proces	ses with	n the glottal stop. ²			
d	banneo	d from	word initial syllables;	restric	ted to	word internal syllabic
	onsets	:				
	modä-	'see'		bodu	'tundra	3
	kod	'sledge	' (but also <i>kodu</i>)			
/d'/ as allophor	ne of /j/ [:]	3				
	d'oxa	'river'		d'a	'earth'	
	d'uba	'warm'		d'eri	'day'	
	d'iri	'moon'				
/d'/ as /d'/						
/4/ 45/4/	kad'a-	'to hun	ť	ped'u	'south'	
	ad'i-	'to sit'	-	-d'i²	PX.PL.	2DU
	mod'	'eqo'		-		-
		- 3•				
n – ń	nui	'island'		nara	'spring	
	no	'openin	ng, door'	nä	'womai	n'

 $^{^2}$ In the speech of ANP /t'/ is a possible allophone of /č/ but this is restricted to his idiolect. ³ In Tundra Nenets, etymological cognates have retained /j/ in onsets.

	mona	'egg'	bunyk	'dog'
	inaa	'older brother'	onai	'real'
	tonä	'exist.3SG'		
	ńi²	'name'	ńaba	'hare'
	ńugu	'soft'	ńe	'child'
	tuńi	'gun'	kańi-	'to go'
	kuń	'how'		
ð	Banne onsets	d from word initial syllables :	s, appe	ars in word internal syllable
	kaða	'grandmother'	baða	'word'
	koði	'nail'	kaðu	'snowstorm'
	äðða-	'to drive'	-CC e.	g. <i>kańi-ð</i> ' 'I go, I went'.
S	soiða	'good'	sama	'animal (generic)'
	salba	'ice'	kasa	'man'
	osa	'meat'	syra	'snow'
	sä"	'face'	mosra	ð" 'I work, I worked'
	sei	'eye'	sumoi	b''l fall'
	Especi	ally in fast speech, /s/ tends to	o be utt	ered as a dental spirant.
Š	šiði	'two'	še	'who'
	oša	'Evenki/Dolgan'	šuðibi	<i>ču</i> 'fairytale'
	toš	'down'		
	/š/ is a	audibly clearly voiced, regard	less of	position though no phonemic
	contra	st is attested.		
r	roða	'Russian' otherwise no exam	ples for	syllable initial r
	koru	'knife'	kari	'fish'
	kamir	'a dead person'	šer	'thing'
I - I'	logaŕ	'hill'	lata	'desk'
	leu	'cry, scream'	lyði	'bone'

In suffixes, /I/ and /r/ are in complementary distribution due to morphonological rules (e.g. INCH -rV- / -IV- or PX.2SG -r versus -I).

ľiču	'cradle'	l'ibi	'eagle'
sodl'a	'a kind of small bird'	ŋul'	'very'

- r ŕ
 There exists a single but perfect minimal pair though not on lexeme level:
 to-r 'your lake' versus *toŕ* 'such'.
 - *česi* 'lasso' *čiki* 'this' *čubai* 'thumb' *čukči* 'all' *koči* 'fog' *l'iču* 'cradle'

č

/č/ can be voiced but no attested phonemic contrast. Not attested in coda position either.

- j Restricted to onsets of word internal syllables e.g. *kaja* 'sun' or *puja* 'nose'. In word initial onsets, /j/ is realized as *d'* e.g. *d'oxa* 'river' *d'a* 'earth, ground'.
- k *koru* 'knife' *kasa* 'man' *keriń* 'l myself (emphatic)' *kiði* 'bowl' *tuka* 'axe' *ṁaruk* 'quickly' adverbializer -*Vk čukči* 'all'

g Banned from word initial onsets and probably also from codas.

moga	'forest'	pagi	'parka'
poga	'neť	bogl'a	'bear'
bagl'a	'Ket/Selkup'	aga	ʻbig, old'

n Restricted to word initial syllable onsets, not attested elsewhere.

ηa 'sky, weather' *ηο* 'foot' *ημΙ*' 'very' Does not appear in native Forest Enets lexemes in word initial onsets nor is it allowed in codas.

х

"

d'oxa 'river' *näxu* 'three' NB Several Tundra Nenets loanwords have preserved their /x/ in onsets such as *xaläu* 'seagull', *xobarta* 'elk'. Before mid and high front vowels, /x/ is palatalized but a phonemic contrast could not be detected.

The glottal stop is restricted almost entirely to coda position: $\dot{m}a^2$ 'chum' $d'u^2$ 'fat'

2. Optional palatalization and palatalization as part of morphonological processes

Occasionally, "additional" palatalization before /i/ is attested and one should clearly draw a distinctive line between optional palatalization (without any morphonological impact) and obligatory palatalization. As for optional palatalization, the verbal stem *kańi-* is a good candidate. Whereas the nasal of the second syllable is clearly palatalized, it is no longer attested after a non-front derivational suffix e.g *ka.nu.tað*" [kan-u-ta-ð" \rightarrow go-FREQ-FUT-1SG] 'I will always go'. In the speech of ANP this alternation is no longer found as in his idiolect the palatalized *ń* affected the preceding vowel's quality and became depalatalized resulting in *käni-* from which all other forms are derived. Unfortunately, the overall number of phonemes which qualify as "optional palatalized" are hard to identify. Therefore, also optional palatalization will be marked throughout this thesis, as another system which I might have not been capable of identifying could be underlying.

Clear cases of palatal alternations before /i/ are attested in several examples but they are infrequent. In the first example, it affects diminutive formation bunyk 'dog' $\rightarrow bunčiku$ 'dog.DIM'.

Also concerning plural suffix formation, palatalization before /i/ with additional vowel loss can be found in a variety of stems ending in -a in Nom.SG e.g. *kasa* 'man, friend' \rightarrow *kašiń*" 'my many friends'. On the other side, *osa* 'meat' a lexeme with similar phonetic shape does not undergo palatalization although the vowel is dropped too: *osa* 'meat' \rightarrow *osyða* 'his many pieces of meat'.

3. Syllable structure

The following syllable types are attested CV, VV⁴, VC, CVC, CVV, VCV, CVCV

a) light syllables

CV	to	'lake',	bu	'(s)he'
CV.CV	koru	'knife'	kasa	'man'
VCV	aba	'older sister'	odu	'boat'

b) heavy syllables						
VC	ub	'end'	ot	'smell'		
CVC	<i>ṁa"</i>	'chum'	bi"	'water'		
CVC	bar	'edge'	šer	'thing'		
CVV	baa	'bed'	boo	'bad'		
CVV.CV	naara	'inner side of skin'	leuŋa	'shout-FREQ.3SG'		

Phonetic shape of suffixes

-V	e.gu VX.SG.1SG	-C	e.g"
-CC	e.g. <i>-ð</i> ″VX.1SG	-CV	e.g. <i>-ru</i> LIM
-CVC	e.g. <i>-xVn</i> LOC - <i>xVð</i> ABL	-CV.CV	e.g - <i>raxa</i> SIM

After inflection, there is clear tendency for closed syllables as the majority of suffixes end in a consonant or in consonant cluster consisting of -C". In several cases, the syllable structure of suffixes leads to re-syllabification. Suffixes of the -C type, when attached to CVV syllables create superheavy syllables e.g. *baa*" 'bed.PL'.

NB A coda consonant can be a product of morphonology:

<i>te</i> 'reindeer'	+ Poss1SG -i <i>→ tei</i>	'my reindeer'
sä"'face'	+ Poss.1SG -i <i>→ säm</i>	'my face'
<i>nui</i> 'island'	+ Poss.1SG -i <i>→ nuib'</i>	'my island'
<i>te</i> 'reindeer'	+ Poss.2SG -r → <i>ter</i>	'your reindeer'
<i>sä'</i> 'face'	+ Poss.2SG -r → <i>säl</i>	'your face'

⁴ VV only one example: *uu* 'you (sg)'

4. Stress

Stress is fixed and falls on the first syllable; therefore it needs not to be marked separately. Stress is realized in terms of intensity and vowels in stressed syllables tend to be slightly longer than unstressed.⁵

A foot usually consists of two syllables (a) but also monosyllabic feet as in (b) are possible:

a)	to	bi	'come-PERF.3SG'	b)	toð"	'l came'
	strong	weak				
	\mathbf{N}	/			S	
	<u> </u>					

A weak secondary stress falls on the third syllable and fifth syllable. Judging from transcribed data and material from elicitation, words containing more than five syllables occur seldom. The longest one deriving from elicitation consisted of 7 syllables.

5. Some questions – both specific and general

- Against my (rather limited) phonological background, the Forest Enets inventory is unusual from an Uralic perspective and also in its Northern Eurasian context. How unusual does this system look like for professional phonologists?
- What does a professional phonologist want to find in a language documentation? What is usually missing from comparable work and ought to be integrated?

⁵ Especially in the beginning, my fieldwork materials contain many instances where I erroneously marked a stressed vowel as long.