## 01   Introductory Lesson: Generalities of the Ainu Language

**Notes**

1.1 The Ainu Language | 1.2 The Rules of a Language | 1.3 Linguistic Typology

### 1.1   The Ainu Language

Ainu is a language of Far East Asia historically spoken in the territories of today's Japan and Russia that face the southern and eastern coasts of the Okhotsk Sea. Specifically, Ainu was spoken all through the island of Hokkaidō (also referred to as 'Ezo/ Yezo' in Japanese, especially before the formal annexation of the island to Japan in 1869), in the southern part of Sakhalin island (called 'Karafuto' in Japanese), at the two extremities of the Kuril Islands chain (called 'Chishima' in Japanese), and on the southernmost tip of the Kamchatka peninsula. Archaeological and toponymic evidence indicate that the Ainu, or more precisely the Proto-Ainu, moved into Hokkaidō and the other territories they have inhabited historically from the south – that is, from the island of Honshū. The Ainu northward migration into Hokkaidō was completed around 1000 CE. Further expansions took place later: around 1300 CE for southern Sakhalin and around 1500-1600 CE for the Kuril Islands. Originally part of the Satsumon culture, the ethnic traits of Historical Ainu were shaped during the Proto-Ainu migration, first through contact with the Emishi of northern Honshū and then through contact with the Okhotsk culture (Janhunen 2022 and references therein).

The Ainu language has traditionally been regarded as an isolate language – that is, a language with no relation to any other languages, either still existing or extinct. This stance is universally agreed upon, despite the many proposed attempts at proving its relation to other languages of Asia (Dougherty 2019, 100). Ainu also shows a great dialectal variation. For this reason, the language may also be classified as a small language family, known as 'Ainuic' or 'Kurilic', which would comprise three separate languages: Hokkaidō, Sakhalin, and Kuril Ainu (Janhunen 2022, 59). These three entities would otherwise be considered different varieties of one single language, if we accept the traditional classification. At any rate, even if we agree on acknowledgeing an Ainuic/Kurilic language family, linguistic isolation still remains.

### 1.2   The Rules of a Language

For any language we can have prescriptive rules and descriptive rules. How do they differ?

- <u>Prescriptive rules</u> tell us what is 'right' and what is 'wrong', that is how the language *should* or *shouldn't* be used for a correct and efficient communication. These rules define what is grammatical and what is ungrammatical.

- <u>Descriptive rules</u> tell us how the language *is actually* used by speakers, making no judgement on its being 'right' or 'wrong'. They are based on empirical observations made of the language, that help analyse and describe its patterns.

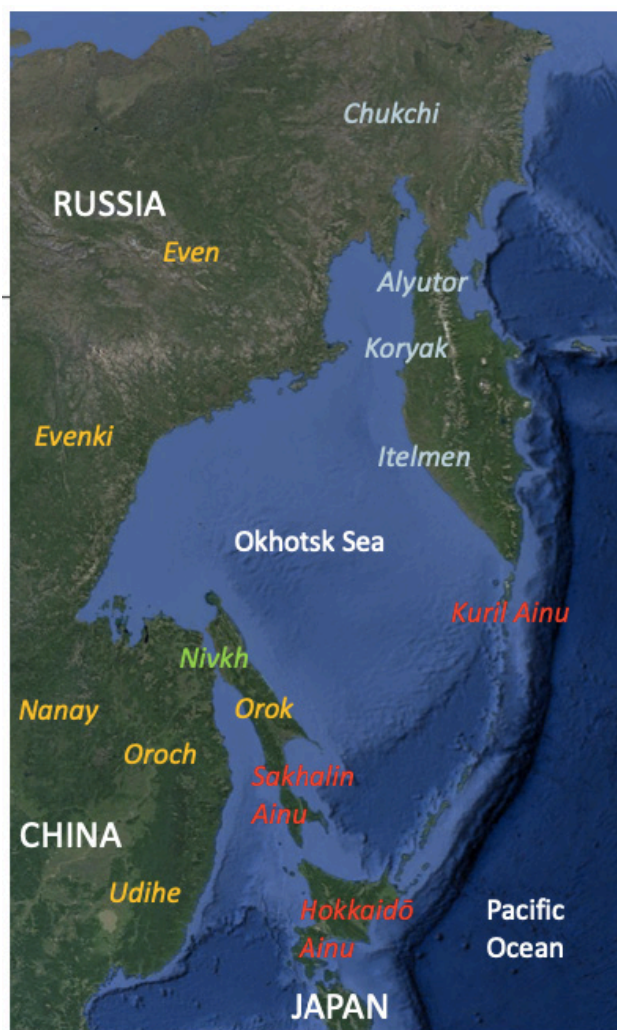In this course we will try to produce descriptive rules from the Ainu data we analyse.

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**Exercise 1**
Are the following statements prescriptive or descriptive?

(1)  Some masculine nouns in Icelandic do not have the ending -*i* in the dative singular.

(2)  The English sentence *I don't say nothing* is wrong.

(3)  In written English one should avoid contracted verb forms such as *haven't* or *doesn't*.

(4)  In the English language used on social networks we see the tendency to not use the apostrophe in contracted verb forms (e.g. *dont* for *don't*).

## 1.3 Linguistic Typology

Typology is a discipline of linguistics that studies the variation among languages, measuring its span, differences, and similarities. Typologists create 'groups' of linguistic features that bring languages together and that can be employed to make predictions about those languages.

There exist different types of typology, that refer to different areas of linguistics and are thus defined using different criteria. It follows that languages akin to each other with regards to one typology may differ with regards to another. There are two main typologies:

## Morphological typology

- Synthesis index or "how many morphemes are there in one word?"

The answer to this question delineates a continuum at whose extremes we find isolating (or analytic) languages, with one or a few morphemes per word, and polysynthetic languages, with many morphemes per word.

| isolating | synthetic | polysynthetic |

Central Yup'ik (Eskimo-Aleut, USA) is an example of a polysynthetic language. The example below, which is translated into a full sentence in English, constitutes a single word in Central Yup'ik. In this word there are only two roots, one nominal (i.e. reindeer) and the other verbal (i.e. hunt), while all the other morphemes are inflectional morphemes conveying grammatical information.

*Tuntu-ssur-qatar-ni-ksaite-ngqiggte-uq.*
reindeer-hunt-FUT-say-NEG-again-3SG.IND
'He had not yet said again that he was going to hunt reindeer.'
(Eliza Orr in Payne 2006, 190)

- Fusivity index or "how many functions/meanings are there *simultaneously* in one morpheme?"

The answer to this question delineates a continuum at whose extremes we find agglutinative languages, with one meaning per morpheme, and fusional languages, with many meanings per morpheme.

| agglutinative | fusional |

Japanese (Japonic, Japan) and Russian (Slavic, Russia) are examples of an agglutinative and a fusional language respectively. In Japanese, the morpheme *-saser* only conveys the grammatical information of 'causative'. In Russian, on the contrary, the single morpheme *-u* encodes three different pieces of grammatical information regarding case (accusative), gender (feminine), and number (singular).

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*Mi-**saser**-u.*
see-CAUS-N.PST
'To make see.'

*Ja      čita-ju        knig-**u**.*
I        read-1S.PRES    book-ACC.F.S
'I read a book.'

## Syntactic typology

"What is the linear order of the verb and the direct object with respect to each other?"

The answer to this question distinguishes languages in two main groups: VO and OV. This syntactic order of constituents usually has systematic repercussions on the order of words within phrases and clauses within sentences.

VO languages usually have:
- prepositions
- auxiliary-verb
- main clause-relative clause
- verb-adverb
- …

OV languages usually have:
- postpositions
- verb-auxiliary
- relative clause-main clause
- adverb-verb
- …

**Exercise 2**
**Ainu (Ainuic/Isolate, Japan) (constructed examples)**
Consider the following clauses and their translation. How much can you understand of the main characteristics of this language? What kind of observations concerning its typology can you make by looking at these examples?

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Seta apkas* | 'A dog walks' | _____ |
| *Seta kam e* | 'A dog eats meat' | _____ |
| *Kam k-e* | 'I eat meat' | _____ |
| *Seta ku-nukar* | 'I see a dog' | _____ |
| *Huci cise orun apkas* | 'The old woman walks towards the house' | _____ |
| *Cape ci-nukar* | 'We see a cat' | _____ |
| *Apkas-as* | 'We walk' | _____ |
| *Pon cape* | 'The small cat' | _____ |
| *Poro cise ku-nukar* | 'I see a big house' | _____ |
| *Seta pon* | 'The dog is small' | _____ |
| *Pon seta* | 'The small dog' | _____ |

## Exercise 3
### Nivkh (Amuric/Isolate, Russia) (constructed examples)

Consider the following clauses and their translation. How much can you understand of the main characteristics of this language? What kind of observations concerning its typology can you make by looking at these examples?

Fill in the set with the missing translations. Then, on the basis of the morphosyntactic rules of the language you have deduced from these examples, form one grammatical and one ungrammatical sentence.

| | |
|---|---|
| *ɲivxɣu pʰrəc* | 'The men come' |
| *umguɣu itc* | 'The women speak' |
| *ɲivxɣu pʰref ŋəŋc* | 'The men look for their own house' |
| *cʰaχ urɬ* | 'The water is good' |
| *umgu ɲtefin cʰai taɬ* | 'The woman drinks tea in my house' |
| *if ɲteftoχ pʰrəɬ* | 'She comes towards my house' |
| *umgu liɣs ŋəŋɬ* | 'The woman looks for the wolf' |
| *atak qʰotr kʰuɬ* | 'Grandfather kills a bear' |
| *ɲivxɣu ɲatak qʰotr kʰuɣətftoχ vic* | 'The men go to the place where my grandfather has just killed a bear' |
| *ɲivxɣu cʰai taɣətc* | 'The men drink all the tea' |
| *umgu pʰreftoχ viɬ* | 'The bears look for water' |

## Exercise 4
### Yagua (Peba-Yaguan, Peru) (examples from Payne 2006, 204-5)

On the basis of the following examples determine whether this language is of the VO or OV type and whether it is of the SV or VS type. Justify your answer. Then list your observations on the order of the other constituents – given your generalisations on syntactic typology, is this constituent order expected or not (or you can't tell)? In the following exercise the asterisk marks ungrammatical examples.

1. a. Sa-munaa-dee Alchíco. 'Alchico's placenta.' _____
   3SG-placenta-DIM Alchico _____
   b. Alchíco munaadee. 'Alchico's placenta.' _____
   *Munaadee Alchíco, *Alchico samunaadee. _____
   c. Samunaadee 'His placenta.' _____
2. Jirya munaadee. 'This placenta.' _____
   *Munaadee Jirya. _____
3. Tɨnkɨɨ munaadee. 'One placenta.' _____
   *Munaadee tɨnkɨɨ. _____
4. Samunaadee kúútya. 'His placenta whispers.' _____
5. Sakúútya Alchíco munaadee. 'Alchico's placenta whispers.' _____
6. Jíryoonú súɥ́yⱥ-anú sa-roori-myú Alchíco-níí. _____
   bushmaster bite-PAST 3SG-house-LOC Alchico-3SG _____
   'A bushmaster (snake) bit him in Alchico's house.' _____
   *Jíryoonú sasúɥ́yanuníí. ('A bushmaster he bit him.') _____
7. Sa-súɥ́y-anú jíryoonú Alchíco roori-myú-níí. _____
   3SG-bite-PAST bushmaster-3SG Alchico house-LOC-3SG _____
   'A bushmaster (snake) bit him in Alchico's house.' _____
8. Sⱥ-ⱥ ráⱥ́-kyu. 'He will jump!' _____

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| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3SG-FUT | jump-POT | | | |

\*Ráą́kyu są́ą, \*Sarą́ą́kyu są́ą, \*Sarą́ą́kyu ą.

9. | Sa-niy | suvų́-tyąa | jiñu | munátya | sų-ų́mutęęsá |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3SG-MALF | fear-INTS | this | ancestor | 3SG-behind |
| munaa | játiy | sa-ręę-ñíí. | | |
| placenta | REL | 3SG-jump-3SG | | |

'This ancestor is really afraid behind the placenta that makes him jump.'

10. | Rą-a | jáą́-charatá | jiyu-dáy | koodí-vyiimú. |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1SG-FUT | fall-might | here-DAY | snake-inside |

'I might fall here inside a snake.'