

Nivkh polysynthetic features within and across clauses

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Nivkh (Paleosiberian) is characterised by the whole range of typical polysynthetic traits listed in (Mithun 1988, Fortescue 1994, 2007, Evans & Sasse 2002, Bickel & Nichols 2007). The language features a large inventory of bound morphemes, an abundant number of verbal morphological slots, a dependent-head noun-verb synthesis similar to noun incorporation, encoding of object and some adverbial concepts on the verb, a systematic allomorphy of bound and free morphemes (Mattissen 2003).

On the other hand, Nivkh lacks such polysynthetic properties as encoding of subject through pronominal affixation, adverbial-type affixes, as well as non-configurational syntactic structure. Furthermore, Nivkh does not avoid non-finite clauses, which is typical of polysynthetic languages, cf. (Mithun 1984, Baker 1996), but, on the contrary, displays a highly developed system of non-finite converbs that are used for clause combining in various types of paratactic constructions.

My paper focusses on the issues that have attracted less attention in the discussion of Nivkh status as a polysynthetic language. I am going, first, to examine Nivkh holophrastic verb complexes as possible indicators of core polysynthesis, cf. (Fortescue et al. 2012), and, second, to compare how polysynthetic features or their absence manifest themselves in verbal complexes that are attested in matrix and embedded clauses respectively.

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