

**Anthropocentricity of the language of the native low-numbered  
population of the north  
(based on the example of landscape-related vocabulary in the Kildin  
Saami language)**

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**Abstract**

This article describes the anthropocentricity of the Kildin Saami language, which is based on an examination of the restrictions related to the specificities of human activity. A new perspective on the anthropocentric approach towards studying language is presented, taking into account the ad hoc communicative nature of human interactions. It is demonstrated that meaning emphasis and word separation in the Saami language depend directly upon the meaningfulness of real-world objects for the ethnic group's daily living activities.

**Key words:** anthropocentrism, Kildin Saami language, vocabulary

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**Introduction**

The relevance of this article's subject matter derives from the growing anthropocentricity of new research ideas, and from the importance of addressing the question of how endangered and low-numbered languages should be documented (on this subject, see for example Bauman, 2015; Grenoble-Whaley, 2009; Lehmann, 1999; Michelčíková, 2011; Swaan, 2004) and how knowledge about the endangered language and culture of this Northern ethnic group might be preserved and systematised. In most of today's linguistic research works, the anthropocentric approach towards studying language facts is merely declarative. It is therefore necessary to define indicators of anthropocentricity for an ethnic language that has a limited vocabulary, reflects a naïve type of popular knowledge, and remains closely connected to its natural environment. One of the languages of the Russian Saami people, the Kildin Saami language, fits these criteria.

Historically, the Saami people were divided and spread across four countries: Russia, Finland, Norway and Sweden. The Saami people of Russia (the Kola Saami people) reside on the territory of the Kola Peninsula, where the Murmansk Administrative District is located. The Saami languages belong to the Finno-Ugric part of the Uralic family of languages and can be divided into western and eastern groups: the Western Saami languages (South Saami, Ume Saami, Pite Saami, Lule Saami, North Saami) and the Eastern Saami languages (Inari Saami, Skolt Saami, Akkala Saami, Kildin Saami, Ter Saami). In this work, we will refer to the 'Kildin Saami language,' which is the generally accepted term in modern linguistic practice.

The Kildin Saami language is among the critically endangered languages, which is linked to the distantiation of the Saami people from their traditional production activities and way of life, the dispersion of their places of residence, the absence of an educational environment, the lack of relevance of the Saami language within the Saami people's environment, and the longstanding influence of the Russian language over the Saami language.

**Research subject and approaches**

The purpose of the article is to define what anthropocentricity is in an endangered language (based on Kildin Saami language material).

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Anthropocentricity is a universal principle according to which a language's picture of the world is organised; it is one of its inherent, universal properties. The anthropocentricity of a language system may be apparent at various levels: phonetic, lexical and grammatical. In analysing the linguistic material at hand, this work follows a principle that entails examining those properties of the language that are anthropologically conditioned, and above all those properties which can be explained by its systemic and normative restrictions (restrictions that are inherent to its system and rules), or which are due to the particularities of human activity and to the ad hoc communicative nature of human interactions (see, on this subject, Serebrennikov, 1988: 9-11).

In our article, the anthropocentricity of the language of the native low-numbered Northern people is based upon establishing the fact that meaning emphasis and word separation in the Kildin Saami language are directly dependent on the importance of an object, a characteristic or an action for a practical human activity.

It is important to make a clear distinction between the anthropocentricity of the actual object under investigation – the language – and our anthropocentric approach towards that object. In this work, we will analyse both the anthropocentricity of the actual object – the Kildin Saami language – and the specificities of taking an anthropocentric approach towards studying the vocabulary of the Kildin Saami language.

### **Resources and techniques**

The material studied in this article is the landscape-related vocabulary of the Kildin Saami language. The landscape (or terrain) is a major characteristic of a people's living environment; it has a direct influence upon their daily living activities, their living conditions and everyday life, their customs and their culture, which are particularly important for an indigenous people. For this reason, studying the landscape-related vocabulary reveals in a particularly clear manner the anthropocentricity of a lexical system.

The anthropocentricity of the studied material becomes evident when comparing a lexeme and its signified denotation, and when the connotative elements of a word's lexical meaning are shown. It is important to uncover the differentiating semantic attributes that are related to the specificities of the ethnic group's living activities. These tasks are achieved through a componential and culturological analysis of the words contained in a given lexical set.

An anthropocentric approach in this article is applied by using a comparative analysis of the lexical meaning of words between the materials of lexicographical sources from the late 19th to the mid-20th centuries (IT; GS) and those of field studies conducted in the early 21st century by the author of this article in an area densely populated by Saami people: the village of Lovozero in the Murmansk Region, from 2008 to 2016. This method of analysis has helped us clarify the degree of preservation of this critically endangered language. In this article, the material – the landscape-related vocabulary of the Kildin Saami language – is analysed through an anthropocentric approach according to the degree of preservation of the language's lexical assets: the informants, who were native speakers from the village of Lovozero in the Murmansk Region, were questioned about the 'recognisability' of lexemes as recorded in lexicographical sources from the late 19th to the mid-20th centuries (IT; GS). Using this method, we were able to determine what exactly in modern language remains relevant to a native speaker, what characteristics of real-world objects are significant and useful in the modern life of the Northern people, and what role those real-world objects play in the life of a modern Saami person.

Despite a long history of written records dating back to 1933, the Kildin Saami language still today follows no graphic or orthographical standards that would

be generally accepted in the Kola Saami community (see, on this subject, Ivanišičeva, 2016). The materials quoted throughout this article are, therefore, presented using several different graphic systems: the Finno-Ugrian transcription system, the simplified Finno-Ugrian transcription system, and also different types of orthographical spellings. The article quotes specimens of Kildin Saami words and word combinations according to their sources, or, in the case of the field research data, according to the informant's choice. Where there are different names for a single object presented in its different graphic and orthographic variants, these are considered in this article as a single lexeme (e.g.: *явврь* (AN: 374; AF: 431; K: 115); *яверь*, *явирь*, *явр*, *яврь* (GS: 122); *jàuṽʳ* (IT: 86) 'lake').

## Research

### **Anthropocentricity as a language characteristic and as a method: the problem of concept correlation**

The idea of anthropocentricity, which has existed in science ever since antiquity, was explained in detail in the works of V. von Humboldt and further developed in works by H. Steinthal, H. Paul, A.A. Potebnja, I.A. Bodujen de Kurtenje, D.N. Ovsjaniko-Kulikovskij, É. Benveniste, G. Guillaume, L.V. Shherba, Ju.N. Karaulov, Ju.S. Stepanov, E.S. Kubrjakova, V.M. Alpatov, A. Weirzbicka and many more. It is not by coincidence that so much attention has been devoted to anthropocentricity, since 'anthropocentrism has provided order and structure to humans' understanding of the world, while unavoidably expressing the limits of that understanding' (Boddic, 2011: 2).

A traditional definition of anthropocentrism as a distinctive characteristic of linguistic science was established by E.S. Kubrjakova. She contends that the fact of focusing on the native speaker's essential characteristics as a human being, i.e. the interest for the human being as the centre of the universe and for human needs as defining the various types of human activities, is due to our drive towards finding an explanation to language phenomena and to the way in which language is made. Anthropocentrism as a specific research principle consists in studying scientific objects first and foremost from the point of view of their role for humans, their purpose within human living activities, their functions in the development of human personality and its improvement. Anthropocentrism may be observed in the fact that the human being becomes the reference in the analysis of various phenomena and is himself involved in that analysis as he defines its perspective and its ultimate goals. Anthropocentrism marks, in other words, a tendency towards placing the human being at the top of the perspective in all the theoretical premises of a scientific study and conditions its specific angle of approach (Kubrjakova, 1995: 212).

One indicator of the anthropocentricity of a language is the naming of real-world objects, their parts and their functioning characteristics, according to whether or not they are meaningful to humans. The absence of a name for things, or parts of things, that are not significant to humans is a fairly widespread phenomenon in various languages. For instance, the Russian word *край* [edge, boundary] designates not just any boundary of an object, but only its open boundary: *край стакана* [the edge of a glass] is precisely the upper boundary, not the lower boundary of the glass's wall (the one adjacent to the bottom of the glass) (Rahilina, 2008: 15). There is no name for the lower boundary of a glass in the Russian language. That lower boundary is not significant to a native Russian speaker and bearer of the Russian culture.

One can speak about the anthropocentricity of a particular terminology by comparing scientific terms against popular ones. Observing the particular anthropocentricity of scientific and popular terminology in the field of biology, A. Rascicyn notes how the specification of an object includes, on an equal footing, its particular features (structure, external aspect, behaviour, etc.) and everything that is

linked to it from a human point of view (its harmfulness or usefulness, including, in particular, its medicinal or magical properties, the superstitions, legends and tales in which a plant or an animal may appear) (Rasnicyn, 2013: 86). This is also confirmed by linguistic field research. Such anthropocentricity and pragmatism towards concepts are evident in the answers given by the informants during field research studies: what matters to a native speaker is not how this or that phenomenon is catalogued, but how important it is for human life and human activities (see, on this subject, Myznikova, 2013: 55).

It is therefore extremely important to study the anthropocentricity of the object under investigation itself. However, adopting an anthropocentric approach towards that object is equally important.

Anthropocentrism as an approach towards research means choosing a path according to which all scientific objects are studied, first and foremost, according to the role which they play for humans. V.M. Alpatov underlines a setback of the anthropocentric approach, noting that it excludes any result verification procedure; therefore, applying this approach to languages that are remote from one's mother tongue may lead to inadequate results (Alpatov, 1993: 18-25). That is why it is important to define the specificity of our anthropocentric approach towards studying the language of the native low-numbered populations of the North, of which there are less and less native speakers. In this article, we propose a new perspective on the anthropocentric approach towards studying a language. This approach is based on examining the ad hoc communicative nature of the language's way of functioning. The disappearance of a language is closely related to its socio-linguistic situation. The everyday-life functions served by the Kildin Saami language, the lack of motivation of younger Saami people to study Kildin Saami compared to the interest of Norwegian and Russian Saami young people in studying the language of Norwegian Saamis (Northern Saami language), and the aging of the population of native Kildin Saami speakers, all contribute to the deterioration of its situation. Not only the language, which is one of the repositories of Saami culture, but also knowledge about that culture may be lost. One of the ways of preserving a language is to revitalise it. To solve the problem of revitalising an endangered language, it is important to know its current state, including what characteristics describing real-world objects are still active in the minds of the native speakers and which ones have been lost.

### **Anthropocentricity as a characteristic of an endangered language (based on materials from the landscape-related vocabulary of the Kildin Saami language)**

As shown by our analysis of the material at hand, the terminology describing aquatic landscapes in the Kildin Saami language is more diverse than that which refers to ground landscapes. It is noteworthy that in the language material of the Saamis' geographical neighbours (Karelians and Vepsians) who live on the territory of Karelia, where the terrain is similar, the opposite is true. The research works of N. Mamontova and I. Mullonen note only a limited number of Karelian and Vepsian geographical terms related to water compared to those that describe ground landscapes, characterise the soil, or refer to forest areas (Mamontova-Mullonen, 1991: 123). This fact demonstrates that landscape-related names in a language depend to a greater degree on human living activities than on the particularities of the terrain: in Kildin Saami, there are more terms related to aquatic landscapes than to ground landscapes compared to Karelian and Vepsian, even though the lake-to-land ratio (percentage of lakes versus land) on the Kola Peninsula is only of 3%, compared to 6% in Karelia.

The nomination system for ground landscape elements in Kildin Saami includes names for positive and negative landforms. Among the positive landforms in Kildin Saami are the names for mountain (*вўпп, вўппь, вўпп, virr*), bald mountain (*кўннўт, каннўт, пака, раакки*), hill (*тўррьм, тьерм, тьетт, tiernt*), cliff (*коаллс,*

кōāлле, колле, *kaľľe*, уррьт, *urrĎ*), tundra (*nāxxъk*, *nāhkъ*, *nāgka*, *пагка*, *nāgкэнч*, *nāкэнч*, *пакенч*, *чāpp*, *íšéarr<sup>a</sup>*, *čar*, *čirre*, *íšorr*, *tsharr*), mountain range (*nāxxъk*, *nāxxъk*, *пaxъk*, *пaxъk*, *paĥĥk*), and varaka (*vāřĥ<sup>e</sup>*, *варрь*). The names for negative landforms in Kildin Saami only include flatland (*нēллктесс*, *нēалк*) and valley (*вūммь*).

The nomination system used for aquatic landscapes is characterised by names for open water surface (*чāďзь саий*, *sāv<sup>a</sup>*, *íqvv<sup>e</sup>*), firth (*вūбнь*), gulf (*лūххт*, *luĥht*), cove (*lūřĥ<sup>(A)</sup>*), *вūнн*, *vūBpe*), fjord (*вун*), strait (*чуэлльм*, *чуолм*, *tšuaľt<sup>e</sup>*, *čuaľtm*), creek (*вēлльм*, *виелльм*, *vi<sup>a</sup>ĥ<sup>e</sup>*, *virt*, *суррь*), sea (*mēpp*, *миерр*, *mierr*, *mierr<sup>(a)</sup>*), ocean (*океан*), river (*ēgk*, *joGk*), lake (*явверь*, *яверь*, *явирь*, *явр*, *яврь*, *јаиц<sup>e</sup>*), brook (*вуэйй*, *joGk<sup>(A)</sup>*), *кол<sup>g</sup>kr<sup>o</sup>*), spring (*каййв*, *каийв*, *кайв*, *каĥ<sup>v</sup>*), and bog (*лāммьп*, *йенк*, *йенкь*, *šueňi*, *riďpp*, *lātm<sup>b</sup>p<sup>e</sup>*).

In Kildin Saami, there are significantly more terms denoting positive landforms than terms for negative landforms. In addition, some ground landforms of the Kola Peninsula are not represented at all in the Kildin Saami language: there are no names for moraines, eskers, kames, drift lake basins, or coastal plains. The names for elements of the aquatic landscape, on the contrary, encompass its full diversity. V.K. Alymov, a famous Kola Region ethnographer of the 1930s, noted the wealth of physical and geographical terms describing the aquatic landscape in the Saami language: ‘River, stream, brook, rapids, waterfall, rip current, creek, strait, reach underneath a rapid, reach near an egress, estuary: everything has its own precise name.’ (Alymov, 1935: 10).

The Kildin Saami language’s specific way of naming features of the terrain is linked to the usefulness of the various landscape elements for the ethnic group’s daily living activities. The unique kind of livelihood activities of the Saamis was related to their seasonal nomadic movements. The cycle of nomadic movements depended on the local landscape, the seasons, and the biology and behaviour of the objects of their livelihood (reindeer, fish, game animals and birds).

The Saamis’ main occupations have always been reindeer herding and fishing. Fishing is a more ancient activity among the Saamis than reindeer herding (Volkov, 1996: 24). Fishing was the topmost activity in their life, since it yielded income. The Saami people sold fish to Russian merchants or exchanged it against useful goods. Fishing also allowed them to pay their taxes. They fished on the sea, on lakes and on rivers.

But the Saami people preferred reindeer herding to fishing (L’voy, 1903: 34). The names of ground landscape elements were in great part dependent on the Saamis’ use of reindeer sleighs for travelling (*mēpp<sup>pp</sup>m* ‘low sloping hillock on which one can ride down on a reindeer sleigh’ (LG)). Lichen is considered as the main food of the Northern reindeer, which is why parts of the terrain where lichen grew received a name of their own (*tsharr* ‘lichen-covered mountain (K09: 123)); they were named differently if there was no vegetation at all, meaning that reindeer could not be grazed there (*nāxxъt* ‘cliff, ravine, mountain (without vegetation)’ (AN: 216); *уррьт* ‘high rocky mountain without vegetation, often located near the sea shore’ (LG)).

There is no doubt that the criterion of usefulness for the livelihood activities of the Saami people plays an important role in naming the different parts of the terrain in Kildin Saami. However, when analysing the Kildin Saami vocabulary available to a modern linguistic scientist, one cannot deny the risk that part of this lexical system may have been lost as a result of the gradual extinction of the language and the lack of field research about it at all periods.

Unlike the scientific terminology related to landscapes, in which the distinctive characteristics are ‘height’ and ‘shape’ (cf.: *sopka* or bald mountain ‘isolated hills or mountains with rounded tops’ (GES, 1988: 286); hill ‘low mountain with a round or oval shape’ (GES, 1988: 73, 319), cliff ‘sharply rising, stand-alone

piece of rock, or high steep drop' (GES, 1988: 278)), in Kildin Saami the characteristics of ground landscape elements are described in more detail ('height,' 'shape,' and 'presence of vegetation (forest or lichen)': *выэденч, выденч* 'small summit covered with subalpine birch forest' (GS: 124); *раһһк* 'highest point of a mountain where the snow does not melt, even in summertime' (SOS: 28); *пāххьк* 'mountain covered by vegetation' (KA); *уайв, уэив* 'mountain top with rounded contours' (GS: 124); *кāннбт* 'long, low, and flat bald mountain covered by stones and moss, pleasant to walk on' (ZE; ZN; GP; GT); *куедшкаш* 'mountain covered with pine' (K09: 122); *раҕҕѣ* 'mountainous terrain (bald mountains) on a shore, as opposed to a coniferous forest' (IT: 416).

This emphasis on the differentiating semantic characteristics of 'height,' 'shape,' and 'presence of vegetation' can be explained by the need to name geographical objects that are meaningful for herding reindeer. In summertime, the Saami people graze their reindeer on mountain tundras, where the reindeer seek shelter from the heat and swarms of mosquitoes by staying close to the snow and the mountain tops, while in the autumn and just before wintertime they graze them near lakes, or in areas between a lake and a river. According to V.V. Charnoluskij's data from the 1920s and 1930s, the reindeer grazed primarily on sedge grass and shrubby bogs during the first half of the summer, and in pine forests in the second half of the summer (August and September) (Charnoluskij, 1931: 23-24). That is why the characteristics of 'height,' 'shape,' and 'presence of vegetation' were so relevant in the linguistic conscience of the Saami ethnic group.

The anthropocentricity of the Kildin Saami linguistic material is apparent, as shown by the available data, in the emphasis placed on certain characteristics of geographic features: 'high / low', 'higher than / lower than' and 'with / without vegetation,' which is also due to the necessity of naming meaningful geographic features for the purposes of traditional production activities (reindeer herding and hunting).

Like many other languages, the Kildin Saami language also has indicators of an anthropocentric type of spatial conceptualisation where the surrounding space is, as it were, "humanised" through links with body parts (mountain foot, mountain crest): *нюн, нюнь* (lit. 'nose') 'mountainous spur, projection, "nose"' (GS: 126); *нюннь* '1. nose, beak; 2. bare mountain summit' (KA); *вээџт* 'mountain base' (AF: 59; IT: 776) and 'sole (for example, of a mountain) or bottom (for example, of a piece of water)' (RR); 'sole, base of something' (KA). The lexeme *ʷйэп̄ʷ(e)* ('summit (in place names: mountain with a round summit)' (IT: 767)) is explained by native speakers as 'head' or 'elder' (KA).

An analysis of the names of landscape elements in Kildin Saami showed that there is no distinction in the linguistic minds of native Kildin Saami speakers between certain real-world environmental features that are distinguished in the scientific terminology. For instance, there is no distinction between the concepts of 'gulf', 'cove' and 'firth'. The lexical meaning of the Kildin Saami word *вэ̄нн*, according to our field research data, contains both the semes 'gulf' and 'cove' (RR) (*вун* 'gulfs, coves' (RR)), although in reality these are different environmental features: a gulf is a 'part of an ocean or sea which runs inland, surrounded on three sides by land and connected to the sea by a wide estuary' (Samojlov, 1939: 351); a cove is a 'small gulf protected from the wind, open towards the sea from any single side, and convenient for mooring' (Samojlov, 1939: 144). In this set of words, the fact that the seme 'firth' is present in the interpretation of the words *вэ̄нн* and *лэ̄ххт* (*лэ̄ххт* 'gulf, firth' (GS: 124); *вэ̄нн* 'sea gulf, fjord, large lake gulf, firth' (GS: 124)) is revealing, while the interpretation of the lexical meaning of the word *нарГк* 'cape, point' (SOS: 27) contains in itself two mutually exclusive meanings: point 'part of land projecting into a sea, a lake, or a river with a more or less sharp angle' (Samojlov, 1939: 622); and cape 'large, high point of land; blunt point projecting into

a sea' (Samojlov, 1939: 628). Such facts demonstrate, in our view, the naïve picture of the world of the Northern ethnic group and the anthropocentricity of their language: the absence of a distinction between these concepts points to the fact that the differentiating characteristics of certain real-world features do not play a significant role in the lives of the Saami ethnic group.

As shown by our research, all the characteristics of water-related objects are fully reflected in Kildin Saami vocabulary: size, depth, width, presence of rapids, muddiness, location, presence of vegetation, abundance of fish (see, for example: *лїххт* 'sandy shore (beach)' (AN: 145); *вўни* 'sea cove, sea gulf' (AN: 47); *вдвввл* 'deep spot' (AN: 29); *йырнь* 'the farthest and deepest spot in a large lake' (GS: 124); *вўбнь* 'small-size firth (from a piece of water)' (AN: 43); *валвенч* 'narrow lake gulf running into the lower submerged part of a river valley' (GS: 123); *эббр* 'bank (very high)' (AN: 361); *свль* 'scanty, poor' (for example, a lake poor in fish) (GS: 121); *кў̄̄к<sup>А</sup>* 'waterfall (not abrupt, not steep)' (IT: 178); *кў̄ишук* 'river rapid' (AN: 125)). But the studied material also shows a specific type of spatial orientation that is related to the particularity of fishing activities among the Saami people: *тавас* means 'far away, in the distance (towards a lake)' (AN: 290; AF: 341); *рїндт* is 'the expanse of a lake (far from its shores)' (SOS: 26). Kildin Saami also has named those real-world environmental features which needed to be particularly emphasised for the purpose of surviving under harsh Northern conditions (see, for example: *вугнэк*, 'sedge thickets where a river flows into a lake' (GS: 117); *канть*, 'dry spot in the wetlands' (GS: 118); *эббр*, 'bank (very high)' (AN: 361); *эххтэ*, 'confluence of rivers' (ZE; ZN; GP; GT)).

### **An anthropocentric approach towards studying the vocabulary of an endangered language (based on Kildin Saami language material)**

A comparison between the materials of lexicographical sources from the late 19th to the mid-20th centuries and our own fieldwork conducted in the early 21st century (from 2008 to 2016) revealed a quantitative and qualitative difference in the landscape-related lexical set of the Kildin Saami language.

Firstly, part of the terms mentioned in the lexicographic sources from the late 19th to the mid-20th centuries is no longer functional in modern-day Kildin Saami, as these terms have, evidently, lost their relevance and have transitioned into the language's passive reserve (*вїндар* 'hill, hump, hillock, hummock' (IT: 754), *їсorr-Дс̄ол* 'mountain top' (IT: 679), *їе̄р̄η<sup>А</sup>* 'large water surface, space between two shores (in a sea, a fjord, a wide cove)' (IT: 56), *с̄ав<sup>А</sup>* 'reach, portion of a river with a tranquil flow, standing water between two rapids' (IT: 479), *т̄авв<sup>А</sup>* 'open water surface (particularly in deep sea)' (IT: 578), *суррв* 'space between a river and a river arm at the place where they merge; arm of a stream' (GS: 121), *міе̄-ра̄х̄<sup>Е</sup>* 'low rocky sea shore' (IT: 416), *нїрас* 'river bank at the height of a rapid' (IT: 300), *нїр̄<sup>А</sup>м* 'flat riverside terrace' (IT: 283), *моррв* 'unstable bog' (GS: 119), *нїе̄<sup>В</sup>ра̄х* 'quick ground (in a bog)' (IT: 300), *моатьк* 'portion of land between two pieces of water' (GS: 119), *муотьк* 'land surface between two pieces of water, rough trail, "taybola," neck of land' (GS: 124)).

The loss of part of the vocabulary of the Kildin Saami language is due, in our opinion, to the partial loss of opportunities for traditional sea- and river-based production activities, among other reasons because of the presence/absence of fishing quotas, but also because of the loss of part of the reindeer pastures and the reduction in reindeer population numbers, and the loss or alteration of reindeer herding skills, including because of global warming.

Secondly, there is a difference in the degree of detail with which landforms and parts of the terrain are described between the interpretations of these lexemes in the lexicographical and ethnographical sources and in our field research materials. For

instance, modern Kildin Saami native speakers, unlike the dictionaries compiled by GS or IT, did not indicate any characteristics such as ‘extending beyond the vertical forest limit’ in the lexemes *пахкъ пакенч* (GS: 124); ‘or ‘slightly higher than the upper forest limit’ in the lexemes *íšéarra, čar, čirre* [IT, c. 653]. It would seem that these characteristics are no longer relevant as the native speakers have lost part of their popular knowledge.

In the set of names related to the bog – *моррь* ‘unstable bog’ (GS: 119); *шуннь* ‘spongy bog’ (AN: 356), ‘[spongy] bog (covered with grass)’ (AF: 414), ‘slumps’ (RR); ‘grassy bog’ (GS: 122) – semantic differentiations are made with relation to ‘being in a state of slight movement or instability,’ ‘in which one can get stuck (in grass or mud).’ The modern Kildin Saami informants only know of the lexeme *шуннь*, which is a general semantic lexeme, as opposed to the differentiated semantics of the word *моррь*.

The presence of the lexemes *дэбэнь* ‘quick ground, quicksand’ (AN: 66; AF: 77) and *лойши* ‘quick ground’ (AN: 148), both of which have remained in the active vocabulary of native Kildin Saami speakers, can be explained by the differentiation of their meanings: *лойши* is used to denote ‘portions of overgrown pieces of water covered by vegetation with a thickness of 1 to 2 meters’ (BES: 429), the differentiating seme being, in this case, ‘overgrown with grass and moss.’ In the lexeme *дэбэнь*, the differentiating seme ‘with clay, liquid and deep mud’ is emphasised. The lexeme *ни<sup>б</sup>рах* ‘quick ground (in a bog)’ (IT: 300) is unknown to the informants. In this case, the reverse process can be observed: the general semantic word has been lost, while words with differentiated semantics are preserved.

## Conclusion

In modern linguistics, the anthropocentric approach towards studying language facts is often merely declarative, i.e. it lacks substantiation and concrete applications. In this article, an attempt has been made at justifying and offering a concrete application to the notion of anthropocentricity in the language of a native low-numbered population. As a basis for the notion of anthropocentricity of language, we have examined the systemic and normative restrictions on the functioning of this language which are due to the specificities of human activity and to the ad hoc communicative nature of human interactions. In this respect, this lexical system is a clear example of the anthropocentricity of language.

The anthropocentricity of the language of this native low-numbered Northern people is apparent in the fact that meaning emphasis and word separation in the landscape-related vocabulary of the Kildin Saami language are directly connected with the importance of real-world environmental features in human living activities. For instance, the fact that the terminology related to aquatic landscapes in Kildin Saami covers the full diversity of water-related objects and is more differentiated than the ground landscape terminology demonstrates the difference in usefulness of these landscape elements for the daily living activities of the Saami ethnic group. The fact that in the Kildin Saami language the characteristics of ground landscape features are more detailed (‘height’, ‘shame’, ‘presence of vegetation’ (forest, lichen), ‘high / low’, ‘higher than / lower than’, ‘with / without vegetation’) is due to the necessity of denoting meaningful geographical features for the purposes of traditional production activities (reindeer herding, hunting). The “humanisation” of space through links with parts of the human body (nose, sole, head) and the particular system of spatial orientation related to the particularities of fishing activities (‘distance from the shore’) are indicators of anthropocentrism in the Kildin Saami language. And the fact that there is no distinction in the linguistic conscience of native Kildin Saami speakers between environmental features which are distinguished in scientific terms (‘gulf’, ‘cove’ and ‘firth’; ‘cape’ and ‘point’) means that some distinctive characteristics of



the environment features no longer play a substantial role in the life of the Saami ethnic group.

An anthropocentric approach towards studying the language of this native low-numbered population, which explains the systemic and normative restrictions on its functioning by the ad hoc communicative nature of human interactions, has been applied in this article in the comparison between the landscape-related vocabulary of the Kildin Saami language as recorded in the lexicographic sources from the late 19th to the mid-20th centuries and our own field research materials collected in the early 21st century (from 2008 to 2016). This approach has revealed a quantitative and qualitative difference in the landscape-related lexical set of the Kildin Saami language: part of the terms have lost their relevance, and the degree of detail of the lexemes in describing landforms and parts of the terrain has changed. These restrictions on the functioning of modern Kildin Saami can be explained by the everyday-life functions served by the language, the loss of part of the people's traditional production activities, and the loss of part of their popular knowledge.

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#### **Appendix 1. Abbreviations of informant names used in the fieldwork**

- (GP) Galkin Pjotr Alekseevich (born 1928).
- (GT) Galkina Tat'jana Gavrilovna (born 1936).
- (ZE) Zaharov Evdokim Kuz'mich (born 1956).
- (ZN) Zolotuhina Nadezhda Anatol'evna (born 1960).
- (KA) Kobelev Aleksandr Andreevich (born 1968).
- (LG) Lukin Gennadij Petrovich (born 1949).
- (RR) Rahmanina Roza Mihajlovna (born 1966).

#### **Appendix 2. Abbreviations of lexicographical sources**

- (AN) ANTONOVA, A. A. 2014. Сәмь-рӯшш сәнһғәнэххьк. Мурманск: LEMA. 376 p. ISBN: 978-5-98709-821-9
- (AF) KURUCH, R.D. 1985. (ed.). Сәмь-рӯшш соакһнэхьк. Moskva: Рӯшш кӯлл. 568 p.
- (BES) Bol'shoj jenciklopedicheskiy slovar'. 2000. Moskva: Nauchnoe izdatel'stvo "Bol'shaja Rossijskaja jenciklopedija"; Sankt-Peterburg: Norint. 1456 p. ISBN: 5-85270-160-2
- (GS) Geograficheskiy slovar' Kol'skogo poluostrova. 1939. Leningrad: Murmanskij filial geograficheskogo-jekonomicheskogo nauchno-issledovatel'skogo instituta Leningradskogo universiteta. Tom 1. 145 p.
- (GES) Geograficheskiy jenciklopedicheskiy slovar'. 1988. Moskva: Sovetskaja jenciklopedija. 432 p.
- (K) KERT G.M. 1986. Slovar' saamsko-russkij i russko-saamskij. Leningrad: Prosveshhenie. Leningradskoe otdelenie. 247 p.
- (K09) KERT G.M. 2009. Saamskaja toponimnaja leksika. Petrozavodsk: Karel'skij nauchnyj centr RAN. 179 p. ISBN: 978-5-9274-0362-2
- (SOS) ELISSEVA, Ju.S. — ZAJCEVA, N.G. 2007. (eds.). Sopostavitel'no-onomasiologicheskij slovar' dialektov karel'skogo, vepsskogo i saamskogo jazykov. Petrozavodsk: Institut jazyka, literatury i istorii Karel'skogo nauchnogo centra RAN. 343 p. ISBN: 978-5-9274-0296-0
- (IT) ITKONEN, T.I. 1958. Koltan- ja kuolanlapin sanakirja I. Lexica Societatis Fenno-Ugricae XV. Helsinki: Suomalais-Ugrilainen Seura. 803 p.

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