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On markedness in locative and existential predication: "Existential takeover", frequency and complexity in Siberian languages

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Abstract

The present paper investigates existential and locative clauses in fourteen Siberian languages. It is shown that all of them exhibit patterns of so-called "existential takeover", i.e. originally existential items occurring in locative predication. Starting from the observation that locative predication is frequently viewed as ontologically primary and functionally unmarked against existential predication, these existential takeover patterns are unexpected. Considering the text frequency and pragmatics of locative and existential predication, the paper argues that a markedness-based approach to these domains is unfeasible and leads to false predictions and generalisations. Following from this, it argues that a general typology of locative and existential predication must not contain any a priori restrictions regarding the observed linguistic realisations. Moreover, it proposes a two-layered design of such a typology which considers both the domains themselves as well as possible co-expression patterns.

Keywords: non-verbal predication; locative predication; existential predication; markedness; information structure; Siberian languages

1. Introduction

As widely known, the expression of locative and existential predications (*The book is on the table.* vs *There is a book on the table.*) is tightly interwoven in many languages

of the world. Often, both types share their morphosyntax entirely, only differing in word order, as, e.g. in Finnish (fin; Uralic, Finnic).[1]

(1) Finnish (Uralic, Finnic; personal knowledge)

a. *Kirja* *on* *pöydä-llä.*
book be.3SG table-ADE
'The book is on the table.' LOCATIVE

b. *Pöydä-llä* *on* *kirja.*
table-ADE be.3SG book
'There is a book on the table.' EXISTENTIAL

Although it is widely accepted that the linguistic expressions of locative and existential predications belong together, their relationship is far from settled. Most approaches – regardless of their theoretical framework – assume that locative and existential predications share their propositional content but may differ in their linguistic realisation which is mainly due to information-structural reasons (Lyons 1967: 390; Clark 1978: 87; Freeze 1992: 552; Hengeveld 1992: 94–100; Dryer 2007: 240–241; Creissels 2019: 38). In contrast, some authors, as, e.g. Milsark (1974) and McNally (2011), argue for a different propositional content. I take the former position in this paper, which I elaborate on more in Section 2.1. Section 2.2 wraps up shortly what has been done in linguistic typology regarding the expression of locative and existential predications.

Given this theoretical background, the paper investigates locative and existential predications in fourteen Siberian languages belonging to four language families (Uralic, Turkic, Tungusic, and Yeniseian) from a typological perspective. Section 3.1 describes the languages, their typological profile and the data used. Section 3.2 sketches the general affirmative patterns of the expression of locative and existential predication in the given languages, whereas Section 3.3 discusses their negative counterparts. One significant finding is that in all fourteen investigated languages, existential items are in some respect constitutive for locative predications. For example, Dolgan and Sakha (dlg and sah; Turkic, Northeastern) co-express existential

[1] Here and in what follows, when naming a language for the first time, I always provide its ISO 639-3 code, as well as its genetic classification according to Glottolog.

and locative predication using existential items in either type, like in the Dolgan examples in (2) (Däbritz 2022: 364–370).[2]

(2) Dolgan (Turkic, Northeastern; Däbritz 2022: 365)

a. *Bu karmaːŋ-ŋa-r möːčük* ***baːr.***
this pocket-POSS2SG-DAT/LOC ball **EX.3SG**
'There is a ball in your pocket.' EXISTENTIAL

b. *Onton ke biːr ogo-m Kiri͡es-ka* ***baːr.***
then well one child-POSS1SG Kresty-DAT/LOC **EX.3SG**
'Then one of my children is in Kresty.' LOCATIVE

Similarly, negative locative predications exhibit existential patterns in all investigated languages. As a case in point, Kamas (kms; Uralic, Samoyedic) uses the negative existential item *naga* ~ *nago-* in negative locative and existential clauses (3a, 4a) (Däbritz & Wagner-Nagy 2024: 10-12).[3] In turn, affirmative locative and existential clauses (3b, 4b) display the non-existential copula verb *i-* (ibid.).

(3) Kamas (Uralic, Samoyedic; INEL Kamas Corpus: PKZ_196X_AngryLady_flk.044, PKZ_196X_SU0203.PKZ.071)

a. *Da tăn gijen-də i* ***nago-bi-al.***
and 2SG where-INDEF and **NEG.EX-PST-2SG**
'But you haven't been anywhere.'

b. *Ši? d'ije-gən* ***i-bi-le?.***
2PL taiga-LOC **be-PST-2PL**
'You were in the taiga.'

[2] As pointed out by both anonymous reviewers, the classification of *baːr* as an existential item needs justification. This issue is targeted in detail in Section 3, dealing with Dolgan and Sakha *baːr* in Section 3.4.1. In a nutshell, the argument is as follows: from a synchronic perspective, the item *baːr* is used in generic existential clauses like *God (does not) exist(s)*, it carries the meaning 'presence; existence' when used nominally, and from a comparative perspective, the item has cognates all over the Turkic language family, in most languages being restricted to existential (and possessive) predications.

[3] Again, a justification for the classification of *naga* ~ *nago-* as "existential item" is needed, as correctly pointed out by the anonymous reviewers. In this particular case, the item again appears in generic existential clauses, and an aspectual derivation can yield a meaning 'disappear', both pointing to an existential meaning of the item. See Section 3.4.2 for details.

(4) Kamas (Uralic, Samoyedic; INEL Kamas Corpus: PKZ_1964_SU0207.PKZ.094, PKZ_196X_SunMoonAndRaven_flk.004)

a. *Maʔ-na-l* *sazən* ***naga.***
tent-LAT-POSS2SG paper **NEG.EX.3SG**
'There is no paper at home.'

b. *A* *bărа-gən* *ši* ***i-bi.***
and sack-LOC hole **be-PST.3SG**
'And there was a hole in the sack.'

In either case, it can be shown that the relevant items indeed have initial existential semantics, so they have been taken over from existential to locative predication. To account for the initial existential semantics of the relevant items, Section 3.4 discusses their synchronic behaviour, their diachronic sources and related issues.

Often, it is at least implicitly assumed that locative predication is ontologically primary against existential predication; see, e.g. Lyons (1967: 390) and Freeze (1992: 554–555). Creissels (2019: 41) even explicitly states locative predication (in his terminology: *plain-locational predication, PLP*) is unmarked, and existential predication (in his terminology: *inverse-locational predication, ILP*) is marked. Markedness relates here to functional-semantic, not yet to formal aspects, so more precisely, these accounts assume that existential predications are functionally marked against locative predications. Since the functionally unmarked item in a markedness opposition is expected to spread or being generalised instead of the functionally marked item when the formal opposition of the items is neutralised (Greenberg 2005[1966]: 28–29; Waugh & Lafford 2000: 275; Bybee 2011: 134–135), the "existential takeover" patterns shown above are not expected. This direction of generalisation is frequently explained by the unmarked item being neutral for the whole category expressed – e.g., a present tense item can often be used in semantically past-tense contexts, but not vice versa – so locative predications would be expected to possibly appear in existential contexts, but not vice versa.[4] Consequently, an explanation is needed why

[4] Thanks are due to an anonymous reviewer who pointed me to the fact that diachronic syntax indeed exhibits many instances of loss of markedness or markedness reversal. This observation is surely correct, as spelt out by, e.g., Janda (1996: 215–217). However, to the best of my knowledge, such cases mostly relate to formal markedness (e.g., loss of formal complexity in paradigm regularisation) or usage-based markedness (e.g., replacing the genitive case in German with *von*-PPs) instead of functional-semantic markedness. In any case, the argumentation will show that a markedness-based

some languages still use existential items to express locative predication. In Section 4, I discuss the relevant issues of markedness, formal complexity, salience and frequency. I argue that the observable higher text frequency and formal complexity of existential clauses are the prerequisite and outcome of their higher degree of salience, respectively. Following this explanation, I argue that the notion of markedness has no explanatory force when applied to locative and existential predications since it leads to incorrect expectations and faulty generalisations.

Section 5, finally, points to some immediately following typological implications, which mainly target the design and structure of a general typology of locative and existential predication. Section 6 ties loose ends together and gives an outlook on related questions, including unsolved issues calling for further research.

2. Locative and existential predication

2.1. Delimiting the domain

In this paper, I conceive locative and existential predications from a functional-semantic point of view as expressing the presence or absence of a figure (a.k.a. theme, pivot) in a ground (a.k.a. location, coda). For terminological clarity, I distinguish "locative/existential predication" for talking about semantics and pragmatics from "locative/existential clauses" for talking about linguistic structures and morphosyntax. In this context, it is worth noting that Martin Haspelmath (p.c.) pointed me to the problem of the predicability of existential clauses: following Croft (2022: 290–293, 304–305), the term *existential predication* is a misnomer since existential clauses are per default thetic and, thus, non-predicational clauses in his framework. As shown by Sasse (1987), among others, thetic sentences indeed do not include a concrete referent, about which something is predicated. Still, I assume that it may also be the temporal/local circumstances of a situation in general, which may be the reference point for a predication, called *contextual domain* by Francez (2007: 70–71). Take, for instance, the English existential clause *there is no more coffee*. World knowledge and assumingly also the (extra-)linguistic context suggest that it is not meant to say that there does not exist any coffee at all. Instead, the speaker intends the reading that there is no more coffee to drink in a given situation. Thus, the

approach to locative and existential predication is unfeasible since it leads to contradictory expectations.

existential clause refers to this situation, its contextual domain. From an information-structural point of view, such references have been labelled *abstract topics* (Junghanns 2002: 45; Däbritz 2021: 97–98) or *stage topics* (Erteschik-Shir 2019: 233–235), their linguistic realisations showing several peculiarities, e.g. pitch accent on the subject, verb fronting, among others (ibid.). Consequently, I assume that also thetic sentences may count as predications – though not being their classical representation – which is undoubtedly relevant for the following description of existential predications.

As shown by Hengeveld (1992: 96–98), Koch (2012: 538–541, 545) and Haspelmath (2022: 17–20), the prototypical instances of locative and existential predication are clauses like (5) and (6), respectively.

(5) *The book is on the table.* LOCATIVE

(6) *There is a book on the table.* EXISTENTIAL

Either type of predication expresses location and not the mere existence of a referent, which is why they are often subsumed under one umbrella term such as *locational construction* or alike (Hengeveld 1992, Creissels 2019, Haspelmath 2022, among others). Predications, which lack a specified location (7), represent a different, though often formally similar type of predication (Koch 2012: 538–541, 545; Creissels 2019: 44–45; Haspelmath 2022: 17–20). Following Koch (2012), I call them *generic existentials*.

(7) *There are many unhappy people.* GENERIC EXISTENTIAL

Whether or not sentences like (7) can be discussed and analysed together with sentences like (5) and (6), thus belonging to the same functional domain, cannot be discussed in detail in this paper. Therefore, I leave them out of the systematic discussion and limit the core analysis to locative and existential predications containing a concrete reference to a location. However, as suggested by an anonymous reviewer, I take them into consideration when proving the existential semantics and existential origin of an item under discussion. Due to the non-expressed ground element, generic existentials are less close to locative predication than locational existentials. Thus, it can be expected that semantically existential items appearing in locative and locational-existential clauses must also appear in generic existential clauses (e.g., Dolgan *baːr* as discussed above). In turn, non-existential items can be restricted to locative and locational-existential clauses, as opposed to generic

existential clauses (e.g., the bare English copula verb *be*: *The book is on the table* vs *On the table is a book* vs **Books on linguistics are*).

Following Hengeveld (1992: 94–100) and Creissels (2019: 37), among others, I assume that locative and existential predications have the same propositional content, and their difference lies in the perspectivisation of the relationship of figure and ground. The terms *figure* and *ground* go back to Talmy's (1983) seminal work on the linguistic structure of space. Whereas the figure is a movable referent whose site, orientation etc., are variable, the ground is the reference object for the site, orientation etc., of the figure (Talmy 1983: 232). As for *perspectivisation*, Borschev & Partee (2002) operationalise the term via presupposition, assuming that the perspectival centre of an utterance must be presupposed in a discourse. Thus, in locative predication, the perspectival centre of the utterance is a presupposed figure referent, whereas it is a presupposed ground element in existential predication. In terms of film language, locative predications thus provide a close-up view of the figure, whereas existential predications provide a total view of both the figure and ground.

Indeed, the cognitive perspectivisation of a predication and its linguistic expression are rather abstract and often hardly observable in linguistic structures. However, it is reflected in the information structure of an utterance, more precisely, in its focus-background structure. The focus-background structure of a clause expresses what is most important for the speaker in the given context and what the speaker wants to emphasise (Molnár 1991: 58; Junghanns 2002: 13). This approach is in line with Lambrecht's (1994: 207) assumption that "[…] focus is what makes an utterance into an assertion" since the speaker contributes important (e.g. new, unexpected, correcting) information to the communication to bring the latter forward. So, in the case of locative and existential predications, the speaker either emphasises that the figure is somewhere (locative) or that there is a figure somewhere (existential). In more technical terms, the figure element must not be included in the focus domain in locative clauses, but it is necessarily part of it in existential clauses.

According to Hengeveld (1992: 119–120), existential predications are presentative constructions since they (re-)introduce a referent – the figure element – into the discourse; in terms of functional grammar, existential predications are thus [+presentative], whereas locative predications are [-presentative]. From an information-structural point of view, existential predications thus correlate with sentence focus, which is why the figure is necessarily included in the focus domain of the clause (Lambrecht 1994: 179; Bentley et al. 2015: 47–48; Erteschik-Shir 2019: 233).

Often, it is assumed that this entails the figure being indefinite per default in existential predication, referring to Milsark's (1974) *definiteness restriction*. As convincingly shown by Borschev & Partee (2002: 116–117) and Creissels (2019: 48–49), the correlation of indefinite figures and existential predication holds as a tendency, but not as a condition, cf. the Russian (rus; Indo-European, Slavic) example (8).

(8) Russian (Indo-European, Slavic; Borschev & Partee 2002: 116, glossing adapted)
Context: I was looking for kefir in the shop.
Kefir-a *v* *magazin-e* *ne* *by-l-o.*
kefir-GEN in shop-LOC NEG be-PST-N
'There was no kefir in the shop.'

Here, we see the seemingly contradictory properties that (a) the figure *kefir* 'kefir' is aforementioned in the immediate left context of the clause, but (b) sentence focus – answering the heuristic question of *what happened (then)?* – still yielding an existential reading. In terms of information structure, existential predications thus do not exhibit a segmented focus-background structure, as typical for thetic sentences (cf. Sasse 1987), regardless of the semantic-pragmatic properties of the figure element included. In contrast, locative predications have both a segmented topic-comment and focus-background structure: the figure functions as the topic of the clause, but more importantly, it is presupposed, backgrounded and, thus, excluded from the focus domain (Däbritz 2021: 146–147). The ground, in contrast, is included in the focus domain, the latter being either predicate focus or argument focus in Lambrecht's (1994: 226–233) terms.

In a nutshell, the main distinction between locative and existential predications is their cognitive perspectivisation, which results in non-presentative predicate/argument focus structures in locative predication. In contrast, existential predications are characterised by their presentativity, linguistically expressed by sentence focus structures. In the former case, the figure element must not be part of the focus domain, but in the latter case, it is.

2.2. Typological approaches

Locative and existential predications have been dealt with from various perspectives, including typological approaches. Still, a general typology targeting one or even both of them is yet missing. Assumingly, this is no coincidence but can be explained by the complexity of the domain(s) on the one hand, but even more by the unsolved questions of what to include in the domain and whether we are dealing with one or two domains. In what follows, I try to wrap up existing typological approaches, showing their benefits and caveats, and point to several issues important for this paper.

The first systematic typological approach to locative and existential predication is provided by Clark (1978), explaining word order patterns in locative, existential and possessive predication in roughly 30 languages. Starting from the assumption that the "configuration" of locatives and existentials is shared, Clark (1978: 94–96) argues that definiteness, instantiated in word order permutations, differentiates locative from existential readings. Since Clark (1978: 89–90) assumes that the shared configuration includes locative features, the approach implies that location is ontologically primary to existence. In other words, referring to Kahn (1966) and Lyons (1967), it is argued that existence presupposes location (ibid.). The latter assumption is shared in many subsequent works like Freeze (1992), Hengeveld (1992), Koch (2012) and Creissels (2019), among others.

Whereas functional aspects of locative and existential predication (e.g. Hengeveld 1992) and syntactic accounts to word order permutations in them (e.g. Freeze 1992) took this as their starting point, the morphosyntactic expression of locative and existential predication lacked an in-depth analysis. Stassen (1997) undertook the task of developing a typology of intransitive predication, whereby his approach was deliberately limited to non-presentative intransitive predications (verbal, nominal, adjectival and locational) with a definite subject NP (Stassen 1997: 9–10). Consequently, existential predications are not covered, but the expression of locative predications got some insightful treatment. Stassen (1997: Ch. 2 & 3) singles out three strategies (verbal, nominal, locational) for expressing the above-mentioned types of intransitive predication. The verbal strategy uses bound person-number-gender markers attached to the predicate; the nominal strategy uses an overt or covert copula (which eventually agrees with the subject in person, number and gender); the locational strategy, finally, uses a locative verb agreeing with the subject NP (Stassen 1997: 34–35, 55, 91–95, 111). Apparently, the "default" case is that the verbal

strategy expresses verbal intransitive predication, et cetera, and the crucial point of interest for applying the developed typology is the notion of "strategy takeover". If a language uses a strategy, which is not prototypical for the relevant type of predicate on the synchronic level, the language is assumed to take over the strategy under discussion (Stassen 1997: 29–30). Evidently, this notion is central to the paper at hand since it analyses instances of "existential takeover" in locative predications, which means that an existential strategy is applied to a non-presentative locative predication.[5]

In the realm of locative predications, it is worth mentioning that Ameka & Levinson (2007) state that many languages of the world use postural verbs (most prominently *sit*, *stand*, *lie*) for the expression of locative predication so that the class of verbs possibly occurring in locative predication must be widened. Regardless of whether one subsumes postural verbs under the locational strategy or makes up a separate "postural" strategy, the general assumptions of Stassen (1997) still hold and need not be revised.

Regarding existential predication, McNally (2016) and Creissels (2019) provide the most systematic proposals of a typology. McNally (2016: 212–213) does not assume a common semantic structure of locative and existential predications and clusters the language-specific realisations of existential predication independently from locative predication. Creissels (2019: 41), in turn, states that "inverse-locational predication [encodes] the same prototypical figure-ground relationships, but with the marked perspectivization 'ground > figure'", implying that existential predication is the marked version of locative predication. In the first step of his typology, Creissels (2019: 55–57, 60–64) distinguishes languages which exhibit a designated morphosyntactic construction for the expression of existential predications (e.g. English *there is*) from languages which express existential predications via word order permutations or merely via the context. In what follows, he develops a detailed typology for languages of the former type. As valuable as Creissels' (2019) approach is, it leaves the question open of how to deal with instances of existential takeover,

[5] An anonymous reviewer correctly points out that accepting the term and process of existential takeover presupposes accepting (a) existential predication as a functional domain separate from locative predication and (b) an existential strategy (e.g., the application of semantically existential items) as the prototypical coding strategy in existential predication. Fair enough, neither of these axioms can finally be proven in this paper, but I still think that existential predication is functionally to be separated from locative predication (see Section 2.1), and it is at least not far-fetched to account for the usage of existential items as their prototypical coding strategy. Whether or not this holds cross-linguistically, can, however, hardly been answered in this paper and remains a question for further research.

as shown in (2) and described in detail in Section 4. Should a given language be classified as a "share" language, exhibiting no dedicated existential predication structure, which is counterintuitive since an existential strategy is used? Or should this language be classified as a "split" language, exhibiting a dedicated existential predication structure, which is likewise counterintuitive given that the disambiguation of locative and existential predication is only provided via word order and/or the context? Section 5 deals in more detail with these questions and resulting typological implications.

Finally, Veselinova (2013) and Veselinova & Hamari (2022) provide a comprehensive account of the expression of negative existential predication; however, the perspective chosen is on the expression of negation rather than on the expression of existential predication itself. Still, it provides essential insights, which I take up in Sections 3.3, 3.4.2 and 4 when dealing with negative existentials appearing in locative predication.

As an interim conclusion, it must be stated that to date – regardless of the extensive existing literature and many valuable approaches – there is no cross-linguistically applicable typology of locative and existential predication which recognises all necessary aspects.

3. Locative and existential predication in Siberian languages

3.1. Languages and data

"Siberian languages" is used here as a geographically motivated umbrella term for the roughly 40 languages spoken in Siberia, that is, east of the Ural Mountains in the Russian Federation. Most Siberian languages are severely endangered and at the edge of extinction (Vajda 2009: 425–428). Whereas the Siberian languages belong to different language families (Uralic, Turkic, Tungusic, Mongolic, Yeniseian, Chukotko-Kamchatkan, Eskimo-Aleut) or are linguistic isolates, many of them share several typological features, e.g. the following (see Anderson 2006 and Vajda 2009):

- rather simple vowel systems
- vowel harmony
- suffixal agglutination
- elaborate case systems with many local cases
- dependent-marking structures
- postpositions
- basic SOV word order

- word order permutations used for pragmatic purposes
- clausal subordination with nominalised verb forms

As for the expression of locative and existential predication, the most important features are the widespread possibility of locative case marking of the ground element, the basic SOV word order and the pragmatically driven word order permutations.

The paper at hand does not aim to investigate all Siberian languages but focuses on fourteen of them, spoken, as a tendency, in Western and Central Siberia. Table 1 lists the languages, their genetic affiliation, and the estimated number of speakers according to the last Russian census in 2020[6]. Additionally, it lists the sources from which I took the relevant language data.

LANGUAGE	FAMILY, GENUS	SPEAKERS	SOURCES
Khanty (kca)[7]	Uralic, Ob-Ugric	9,230	- Ob-Ugric Database (Kazym, Yugan and Surgut Khanty) - Steinitz (1975, 1989) (Sherkaly and Synja Khanty) - Annotated folklore and daily prose texts in the languages of the Ob-Yenisei linguistic area (AnnTObY) (Filchenko et al. 2010–2021) (Vasyugan Khanty)
Mansi (mns)	Uralic, Ob-Ugric	1,346	- Ob-Ugric Database (Northern and Western Mansi) - Munkácsi (1892, 1893) (Tavda Mansi)
Nenets (yrk)	Uralic, Samoyedic	24,487	INEL Nenets Corpus (both Tundra and Forest Nenets)
Forest Enets (enf)	Uralic, Samoyedic	97[8]	INEL Enets Corpus
Nganasan (nio)	Uralic, Samoyedic	300	INEL Nganasan Corpus
Selkup (sel)	Uralic, Samoyedic	975	INEL Selkup Corpus
Kamas (xas)	Uralic, Samoyedic	extinct	INEL Kamas Corpus
Dolgan (dlg)	Turkic, Northeastern	4,836	INEL Dolgan Corpus

[6] https://rosstat.gov.ru/vpn/2020 (Accessed March 21, 2024).

[7] Fair enough, as pointed out by an anonymous reviewer, Khanty is rather an umbrella term for several Khanty languages. Still, for the topic under discussion here, all Khanty varieties appear to behave similarly, so they can be dealt with together in this paper.

[8] Note that the Russian census does not differentiate Forest and Tundra Enets. Since Forest Enets is the less moribund Enets variety, it can be safely assumed that the majority of the people declaring to speak Enets are indeed speakers of Forest Enets.

LANGUAGE	FAMILY, GENUS	SPEAKERS	SOURCES
Sakha (sah)	Turkic, Northeastern	377,722	- Alekseev (1995) - Emel'janov & Smirnov (2008) - YRCSC (Yakut-Russian Code-Switching Corpus)
Chulym Turkic (clw)	Turkic, Northeastern	32	- Annotated folklore and daily prose texts in the languages of the Ob-Yenisei linguistic area (AnnTObY) (Filchenko et al. 2010–2021) - ELAR Melets Chulym collection (Filchenko 2016–2019)
Evenki (evn)	Tungusic, Northern	5,831	INEL Evenki Corpus
Even (eve)	Tungusic, Northern	5,304	- DOBES collection "Even" (Aralova et al. 2007–2023) - Sotavalta (1978)
Ket (ket)	Yeniseian	61	- Annotated folklore and daily prose texts in the languages of the Ob-Yenisei linguistic area (AnnTObY) (Filchenko et al. 2010–2021) - *Siberian Lang* database - Dul'zon (1966, 1971) - Kotorova & Porotova (2001)
Yugh (yug)	Yeniseian	extinct	- Dul'zon (1971) - Werner (1997)

Table 1: Languages and data.

Wherever possible, I used electronically searchable language corpora; otherwise, the data come from previously published text collections. In either case, it is essential to mention that the data come from coherent texts and, thus, discourses, so they have linguistic context and can be analysed for discourse-pragmatic features. The data are collected and annotated for several semantic and pragmatic features in the XML-based EXMARaLDA[9] format; afterwards, they are coded in an SPSS database[10] that allows statistical analyses and significance tests. As for analysing the data, it is important to note that the interpretation of the data has two major sources: first, the translations in the corpora are chiefly used for understanding the propositional content of an utterance in question. Second, and more importantly, the interpretation of the reading

[9] https://exmaralda.org/en/, (Accessed on March 21, 2024).

[10] https://www.ibm.com/spss, (Accessed on March 21, 2024).

(locative vs existential) is drawn from the linguistic context of the utterance in question, which is why it is so important to analyse data from coherent texts.

3.2. Affirmative clauses

As a rule, locative and existential clauses consist of three elements in the analysed languages. The figure element is coded as the unmarked subject of the clause, the ground element is a nominal, an adpositional phrase or an adverb marked for location, and the linking element provides a syntactic connection of the former two. Since both locative and existential predications inherently express a figure-ground relation, it is the linking element that cross-linguistically shows the most variation relevant for a typology of locative and existential predication.

To avoid confusion in what follows, I briefly introduce here how I define the coding strategies applied. “Zero copula” means that there is no lexical linking element in the clause. The figure referent can be indexed via person-number suffixes at the ground element, but figure and ground can also merely be juxtaposed. “Copula” means that a semantically empty copula verb, also appearing in nominal and adjectival predication, functions as the linking element. “Semi-copula” designates linking elements that are not entirely bleached, but their original meaning is still transparent. These are locative verbs like ‘be located’ or ‘be placed’, typically being restricted to locative predication and not appearing in nominal and adjectival predication, as well as postural verbs, originally describing a body posture, most prominently ‘sit’, ‘stand’, ‘lie’. “Existential” designates items that have existential semantics, which can be shown by (a) existential usages outside existential predications (e.g. nominal meanings such as ‘existence’, ‘absence’ or ‘lack’), (b) their appearance in generic existentials and (c) prototypical grammaticalisation patterns as described in Creissels (2019). Additionally, it should be noted that I structure the description according to the coding strategies not according to languages. Therefore, language-internal variation is not covered optimally, but for the sake of this paper, this can be regarded as secondary. If variation is relevant for the topic under discussion, I surely point to it.

In locative clauses, the linking element can be either a zero copula, an overt copula or a semi-copula, the latter including any locative or postural verbs. In the case of a zero copula, the figure can be cross-referred to at the ground element (9; Stassen’s (1997) *verbal strategy*), or there is no overt connecting element altogether (10; Stassen’s (1997) *nominal strategy*). The former pattern occurs systematically in Ket

and Yugh but is also present as a minor strategy in Nganasan, Dolgan and Sakha. The latter pattern is widespread in Khanty and Chulym Turkic but is occasionally also attested in all other languages. It must be noted that Russian, as the dominating contact language, also exhibits a zero-copula pattern in present-tense locative clauses (Paducheva 2008: 148), so contact-induced changes cannot be excluded.

(9) Yugh (Yeniseian; Werner 1997: 287)
xeb-ś, *ad* *uk* *fɬ·l'-iŋ-gej-**di**²*.
bear-VOC 1SG 2SG.GEN large.intestine-PL-LOC-**1SG**
'Bear, I am in your intestines.'

(10) Vasyugan Khanty (Uralic, Ob-Ugric; Filchenko et al. 2017: 33)
wajaɣ *jiɣi* *jor-nə.*
animal river middle-LOC
'The animal is in the middle of the river.'

Locative clauses containing a semantically empty copula are most frequent and widespread in Mansi, Nganasan, Selkup, Kamas, Chulym Turkic, Evenki and Even (11). Disregarding possible diachronic evolutions, I classify them as following Stassen's (1997) *nominal strategy* since, synchronically, no locative semantics of the used copulas can be singled out. Finally, Nenets and Enets use locative verbs in locative predication (12), Khanty and Mansi exhibit postural verbs (13), and Dolgan and Sakha show the existential nominal *baːr* 'exist(ing)' (see example (2) in the introductory section), which I discuss in detail in Section 3.4 and 4.

(11) Northern Evenki (Tungusic, Northern; INEL Evenki Corpus: YUK_2007_PoorPeople3_nar.037)
Oːriktə *jes'o* *N'əkəŋdə-du* ***bi-s'o-n.***
Orikte still.R Ekonda-DAT/LOC **be-PST-3SG**
'Orikte was still in Ekonda.'

(12) Forest Nenets (Uralic, Samoyedic; INEL Nenets Corpus: ALY_200206_Life_nar.003)
Šoɬ'a-j *m'a-kna* ***me-štu-t.***
Sholi-POSS1SG tent-LOC.SG **be.there-HAB-1SG**
'I was in Sholi's tent.'

(13) Sherkaly Khanty (Uralic, Ob-Ugric; Steinitz 1975: 299–300)

moχa	*taj-əm*	*topas-ŋət*	*χɔ̄t-ŋət*	*iśə*
before	have-PTCP.PST	storage-DU	house-DU	same
wot-et-na	***ɔ̄məs-t-aŋn̥.***			
place-POSS3SG-LOC	**sit-PRS-3DU**			

'The storage and the house, which he had before, are [lit. sit] at the same place.'

Existential clauses either exhibit the same morphosyntactic structure as locative clauses (Khanty, Mansi, Selkup, Kamas, Evenki, Even), or they contain an existential predicator according to Creissels' (2019) typology (Nganasan, Enets, Nenets, Dolgan, Sakha, Chulym Turkic, Ket, Yugh). In the former case, the disambiguation is guaranteed via word order permutations. For example, the Evenki locative clause (11) above shows the word order "figure – ground – copula", whereas an existential clause (14) shows the word order "ground – figure – copula". Apart from the word order permutation, there is thus no formal difference.

(14) Northern Evenki (Tungusic, Northern; INEL Evenki Corpus: BTV_20190815_ShamanNyokcho_nar.020)

utolə	*Hantajka-du*	*kətəː*	*haman'-il*	*bi-ŋki-tin.*
earlier	Khantayka-DAT/LOC	many	shaman-PL	be-PST.DIST-3PL

'Earlier, there were many shamans in Khantayka.'

In the languages exhibiting a dedicated existential pattern, the linking element may either be an existential verb (Nganasan, Enets, Nenets) (15), an existential nominal (Dolgan, Sakha, Chulym Turkic) (16) or an existential particle (Ket, Yugh) (17).[11] Though the word class of a relevant item is not immediately relevant for typologising the pattern as such, it is essential regarding its diachronic sources and assessing its initial semantics, which are discussed in detail in Section 3.4.

[11] The word-class membership of the items is derived from inflectional categories being attached: TAME morphology in the case of verbs, case and number morphology in the case of nominals and no such morphology in the case of particles. Fair enough, the given examples do not prove that the Turkic items are nominals, as opposed to the Yeniseian particles; however, relying on Johanson (2021: 817) and Georg (2007: 314), this seems to be clearly the case.

(15) Nganasan (Uralic, Samoyedic; INEL Nganasan Corpus: ChNS_080214_Wandering_nar.023)

Təndə	*ŋil'ə-mənu*	*bɨʔ*	*bɨʔ*	***təi-s'ütə.***
that.GEN.SG	bottom-PROL.SG	water	water	**EX-FUT.3SG**

'There will be water under it.'

(16) Chulym (Turkic, Northeastern; Filchenko 2016–2019: TamochevaVA_TamochevGG_05Aug2015_Self_Interview_00043-299)

üs-tä,	*üs-tä*	*palïx*	***par.***
Chulym-LOC	Chulym-LOC	fish	**EX**

'There is fish in [the river] Chulym.'

(17) Southern Ket (Yeniseian; Kotorova & Porotova 2001: 52)

[…]	*ovet-diŋt*	*nan'*	*kan*	***usaŋ.***
	lunch.R-ADE	bread	OPT	**EX**

'[In the morning, I place the dough, I prepare it for lunch,] so there is bread for lunch.'

As for the relationship of affirmative locative and existential predications, the languages under investigation can thus be grouped as follows: [12]

1) The language has one single "non-existential" morphosyntactic structure used in locative and existential predications, the disambiguation being established via word order changes: Khanty, Mansi, Selkup, Kamas, Evenki, Even.
2) The language has different morphosyntactic structures in locative and existential predications; word order changes may additionally point to a locative and existential reading, respectively: Nganasan, Enets, Nenets, Chulym, Ket, Yugh.

[12] Note that the following generalisations hold only for affirmative present tense, indicative mood. The picture becomes more intricate when adding tense or other verbal categories as parameters. Since, however, the paper at hand does not aim at a complete description of locative and existential predication patterns in the investigated languages, this can be left aside here. The following argumentation holds also, if one language is to be classified differently in other tenses, moods or the like. As for negation, see below.

3) The language has one single "existential" morphosyntactic structure used in locative and existential predications, the disambiguation being established via word order changes: Dolgan, Sakha.

The first two groups match Creissels' (2019) division of "share" and "split" languages exactly. In his terminology, the first group correlates to languages exhibiting a *general-locational predication*, disambiguated in the given context, whereas the second group of languages exhibit an *inverse-locational predication* formed by existential predicators, opposed to *plain-locational predication.* The third group, however, rather correlates to languages in which the *inverse-locational predication* loses its marked status and is reanalysed as a *general-locational predication* (Creissels 2019: 61). In the terminology applied here, the existential predication pattern is generalised and taken over to locative predication, thus exhibiting a strategy takeover in Stassen's (1997) sense, which I label *existential takeover*. Since this process seemingly contradicts frequent assumptions on the functional (un)markedness of locative and existential predication, I discuss it amply in Section 4 from this perspective.

3.3. Negative clauses

As for the negation of locative and existential predications in the analysed Siberian languages, one clear tendency is observable: "non-existential" structures in locative predications are given up for the benefit of "existential" structures. In all fourteen languages, negative existential items are at least partially constitutive for negated locative and existential predications, as exemplified by Khanty (18–19), Selkup (20–21) and Evenki (22–23). In either example, the first clause shows a locative predication and the second clause an existential predication. Note that *u-* 'be' in Khanty (18) is necessary for the expression of tense since the past tense marker *-s* must not be attached to the negative existential particle. Consequently, *u-* is not used as a copula element to connect the subject and predicate but rather as an auxiliary.

(18) Sherkaly Khanty (Uralic, Ob-Ugric; Steinitz 1989: 168)

śeman	*jŏtn̥*	***ăntɔm***	*u-s.*
Semyon	at.home	**NEG.EX**	be-PST.3SG

'Semyon was not at home.'

(19) Vasyugan Khanty (Uralic, Ob-Ugric; Filchenko et al. 2020: 56)
jiɣi-nə *muɣi* ***əntim.***
river-LOC crucian **NEG.EX**
'There are no crucians in the river.'

(20) Southern Selkup (Uralic, Samoyedic; INEL Selkup Corpus: SUF_1967_DaughterAndRobbers_flk.242)
Mi *ta-nan* ***t'aŋ-sa-ut.***
1PL.PRO 2SG.PRO-ADE **NEG.EX-PST1PL**
'We were not at your place.'

(21) Southern Selkup (Uralic, Samoyedic; INEL Selkup Corpus: SEV_1967_ThreeSisters_flk.018)
n'äj *maǯi-gu* *mat-qɨt* *paɨ* ***t'äŋg-wa.***
bread stab-INF tent-LOC knife **NEG.EX-CO.3SG**
'There is no fish in the fishing net.'

(22) Northern Evenki (Tungusic, Northern; INEL Evenki Corpus: BTV_20190820_Pankagir_nar.011)
ami-w-ka ***a:sin*** *bi-so-n* *moha-du.*
father-POSS1SG-EMPH **NEG.EX** be-PST-3SG taiga-DAT/LOC
'My father was not in the taiga, [but in the settlement].'

(23) Southern Evenki (Tungusic, Northern; INEL Evenki Corpus: BaN_1930_FoxAndWolverine_flk.039)
d'u:-du-wị ***a:čịn*** *d'əptilə-l.*
house-DAT/LOC-RFL.POSS.SG **NEG.EX** food-PL
'There is no food at home.'

As noted by an anonymous reviewer and spelt out by Panova & Liljegren (forthcoming), among others, negative locative clauses are hard to discriminate against negative existential clauses, because a negative locative clause presupposes the existence of the figure – since it is the perspectival centre – but denies its presence in the given location. Therefore, the negation in locative clauses must not scope over the whole clause, but only over the ground element, yielding contrastive focus

structures (X is not at Y, [but at Z]). Such contexts are rare in natural speech, and the analysed material contains less than fifty clear instances of negative locative clauses altogether. The examples shown above, however, fulfil this criterion. In (18), the figure referent (Semyon) is introduced in the left context, but not the ground referent (at home). Thus, the latter is not presupposed and cannot be the perspectival centre of the utterance, so the example cannot be analysed as an existential clause. In (20) and (22), the speaker talks about the places of being of the figure referents, so the perspectival centre of the utterances is again the figure referent.

For the sake of completeness, however, it should be noted that "non-existential" strategies are also used, triggered by various morphosyntactic parameters. For example, Chulym Turkic shows a split between TAME-unmarked and TAME-marked forms (see Däbritz 2024 for details). In the former, the negative existential *čok* ~ *čoɣul* functions as the linking element in both locative and existential predications (24–25), whereas it is the copula *pol-* 'be(come)' in the past tense (26–27). Again, both (24) and (26) are to be classified as locative clauses since the figure is the perspectival centre of the utterance, which can be derived from the left context in the source material. Additionally, in (26), the speaker lists the places where they have been or not, evoking a contrastive list reading.

(24) Chulym (Turkic, Northeastern; Filchenko et al. 2010: 297)
čilyə-zə *minda* ***čoɣul.***
horse-POSS3SG here **NEG.EX**
'The horse is not here.'

(25) Chulym (Turkic, Northeastern; Filchenko 2016–2019: TamochevaVA_05Aug2015_Self_Interview_00042_1-27)
Pasečnaj-da *škol* ***čoɣul.***
Pasechnoe-LOC school **NEG.EX**
'There is no school in Pasechnoe.'

(26) Chulym (Turkic, Northeastern; Filchenko 2016–2019: Kondiyakov_Gabov_July2016_Meeting-1.44)
nu, nu, män *Töɣöldet-tä* *pir ras-ta* ***pol-v-a-m.***
well well 1SG Teguldet-LOC one time-LOC **be-NEG-PST-1SG**
'Well, I wasn't a single time in Teguldet.'

(27) Chulym (Turkic, Northeastern; Filchenko 2016–2019: KondiyakovAF_06Aug2015_Interview_00024_1-55)

a	*an-da*	*nerva-lor-u*	***pol-v-an.***
and	that-LOC	nerve-PL-POSS3SG	**be-NEG-PST.3SG**

'And there were no nerves there [= under the teeth]. '

Given the observed structures, one might wonder whether the negative existential items included are indeed existentials. In Section 3.4, this question is targeted, and it is shown that both synchronic and diachronic arguments favour treating them as true existentials regarding their lexical source. Given this, Section 4 analyses also the existential takeover in negative locative predications from the perspective of markedness and related issues.

3.4. Sources of existential items

3.4.1. Existential nominals in Dolgan and Sakha

This section deals with the role of existential nominals in locative and existential predication in the Northern Siberian Turkic languages Dolgan and Sakha. I will focus on the affirmative existential nominal *baːr* 'exist(ing)' in this section, whereas its negative counterparts *huo͡k* (Dolgan) and *suo͡χ* (Sakha), respectively, are more closely analysed in Section 3.4.2. As noted already in the introduction, Dolgan and Sakha express affirmative locative and existential predications employing the affirmative existential nominal *baːr* 'exist(ing)'. Examples (28–29) show locative clauses in these languages, and examples (30–31) show existential clauses. As can be seen, only the context and word order differentiate the locative from the existential reading. (28) is the answer to the question "where are you", so the ground element is focused and, thus, evokes a locative reading. In (29), several people are playing monopoly, and one of them states that another must not throw the dice because he is in jail, which again evokes a locative reading. In (30), in turn, the speaker hands a pocket to her son and now explains what is inside. Thus, the figure element is necessarily included in the focus domain. (31) works similarly since the speaker tells what was there on the way.

(28) Dolgan (Turkic, Northeastern; INEL Dolgan Corpus: PoS_PrG_1964_Lyybyra_flk.076)
D'ie̯ *ih-i-ger* ***ba:r-bin.***
house inside-POSS3SG-DAT/LOC **EX-1SG**
'I am in the house.'

(29) Sakha (Turkic, Northeastern; YRCSC, own glossing)
Xaji:-ga ***ba:r.***
jail-DAT/LOC **EX**
'He is in jail.'

(30) Dolgan (Turkic, Northeastern; INEL Dolgan Corpus: ErSV_1964_WarBirdsAnimals_flk.442)
Bu *karma:ŋ-na-r* *mö:čük* ***ba:r,*** *hüter-eje-gin.*
this pocket-POSS2SG-DAT/LOC ball **EX** lose-ADM-2SG
'There is a ball in your pocket, do not lose it.'

(31) Sakha (Turkic, Northeastern; Emel'yanov & Smirnov 2008: 313)
[…] *a:ra* *kie̯ŋ* *nali:* *u:* ***ba:r*** *ebit.*
on.the.way broad spilling water **EX** EVID
'[When he was going,] there appeared to be broad, spilling water on the way.'

For the sake of completeness, it should be mentioned that in other tenses and moods than present indicative, the existential nominal *ba:r* is supported by a form of the copula/auxiliary verbs *e-* 'be' and *bu̯ol-* 'be(come)'. Examples (32–33) and (34–35) illustrate this.

(32) Dolgan (Turkic, Northeastern; INEL Dolgan Corpus: KiES_KiLS_2009_Life_nar.KiES.001)
D'e *Korgo:-go* ***ba:r*** ***e-ti-bit.***
well Korgo-DAT/LOC **EX** **be-PST1-1PL**
'Well, we were in Korgo.'

(33) Dolgan (Turkic, Northeastern; INEL Dolgan Corpus: SiAN_2008_LifeInTundra_nar.SiAN.103)
Urut *kerget-ter-im* ***baːr*** ***er-dek-terine*** […].
earlier parents-PL-POSS1SG **EX** **be-COND-3PL**
'Earlier, when my parents were still there, [they taught me].'

(34) Literary Sakha (Turkic, Northeastern; online data[13], own glossing)
Min *ikki-s* *bölöχ-χö* ***baːr*** ***e-ti-m.***
1SG two-ORD group-DAT/LOC **EX** **be-PST1-1SG**
'I was in the second group.'

(35) Sakha (Turkic, Northeastern; YRCSC, own glossing)
Ikki *štuka* ***baːr*** ***bu͡ol-u͡oγ-a.***
two piece.GEN.R **EX** **become-FUT-3SG**
'There should be two pieces.'

Additionally, both locative and existential clauses can lack the existential nominal *baːr*, as displayed by the Dolgan examples (36–37).

(36) Dolgan (Turkic, Northeastern; INEL Dolgan Corpus: SuON_KuNS_19990303_HardLife_conv.SuON.253)
Patap-ka ***e-ti-bit.***
Potapovo-DAT/LOC **be-PST1-1PL**
'We were in Potapovo.'

(37) Dolgan (Turkic, Northeastern; INEL Dolgan Corpus: PoPD_KuNS_2004_Life_conv.PoPD.042)
Avaːm-ŋa *onno* *taba-lar* *agaj* ***e-ti-lere.***
Ust.Avam-DAT/LOC there reindeer-PL only **be-PST1-3PL**
'There were only reindeer there in Ust-Avam.'

[13] https://www.s-vfu.ru/universitet/rukovodstvo-i-struktura/instituty/iyikn/news/detail.php?SECTION_ID=&ELEMENT_ID=43700, (Accessed on June 23, 2023).

Thus, the copula/auxiliary verb (32–35) and the omission of the existential nominal *baːr* (36–37) concern both locative and existential predications. From a statistical point of view, the existential nominal is more frequent in existential than in locative clauses in either language (EX: 55.9% vs. LOC: 40% in Dolgan, and EX: 73.4% vs. LOC: 42.2% in Sakha). However, since (zero-)copula structures regularly appear in both domains, too, neither the occurrence of the existential item nor its lack can disambiguate locative and existential readings. Therefore, I do not discuss this issue here further.

Applying Creissels' (2019) typology, Dolgan and Sakha belong to the group of "share" languages since the morphosyntax of locative and existential predications is identical. However, the existential nominal *baːr* 'exist(ing)', as well as its negative counterpart *huo͡k* ~ *suo͡χ*, has precise existential semantics, which can be proven both synchronically and diachronically.

First, either item is undoubtedly nominal from a morphological point of view (Ubrjatova et al. 1982: 440; Däbritz 2022: 69–70). This can be shown by lexicalised light verb constructions such as, e.g. Sakha *baːr gin-* 'have available; have in stock' (lit. 'make existent') and *suo͡χ gin-* 'liquidate; defeat' (lit. 'make non-existent') (Ubrjatova et al. 1982: 112, 404), in which the existential syntactically occupies the direct object position. Also, on a synchronic level, either item can occur in argument and adjunct positions without further derivation, as exemplified by (38) and (39).

(38) Dolgan (Turkic, Northeastern; INEL Dolgan Corpus: BeES_2010_HidePreparation_nar.030)

Tuo͡k	*kuhagan*	***baːr-in***	*bari-tin*	*iti*
what	bad	**EX-POSS3SG.ACC**	all-POSS3SG.ACC	that

il-atta-n *ih-el-ler.*
take-MULT-CVB.SEQ go.AUX-PRS-3PL
'They take away everything bad that is there.'

(39) Dolgan (Turkic, Northeastern; INEL Dolgan Corpus: PoPD_KuNS_2004_Life_conv.PoPD.106)

Urut	*otto*	*karči*	***huo͡g-u-ttan***	[…].
earlier	then	money	**NEG.EX-POSS3SG-ABL**	

'Earlier because of the lack of money, [if you want to do something, well…].'

Returning to the existential nominal *baːr* ‘exist(ing)’ in locative and existential predication, its appearance in existential predication is entirely expected given its existential semantics. Consequently, its appearance in locative predication seems less expected from a language-internal perspective of Sakha and Dolgan, and it appears to be a secondary usage. Additionally, it frequently appears in generic existential clauses (Däbritz 2024: 86, 100), which also underlines its existential semantics in the given context.

The secondariness of the appearance of Sakha and Dolgan *baːr* ‘exist(ing)’ in locative predications can also be underpinned from a historical-comparative perspective. Both *baːr* (affirmative) and *huo͡k* ~ *suo͡χ* (negative) are inherited from earlier stages of Turkic, which can easily be shown by their cognates in various Turkic languages of different branches, e.g. Turkish (tur) *var* and *yok*, Bashkir (bak) *bar* and *juq*, Chuvash (chv) *por* and *śuk* ~ *śok*, Kirghiz (kir) *bar* ~ *ʤok* (Karakoç 2009: 218; Miščenko 2017: 111–112; Baranova et al. 2021: 11, 20; Johanson 2021: 484, 817). In most Turkic languages, however, the affirmative existential nominal is restricted to existential and possessive predications. In contrast, a (zero) copula or person-number agreement suffixes are the linking element in locative predication. As a case in point, Bashkir uses *bar* ‘exist(ing)’ in the former types (40a–b) but a (zero) copula in the latter (40c).

(40) Bashkir (Turkic, Kipchak; Miščenko 2017: 121, glossing adapted)

a.	*Beð-ðeŋ*	*awəl-da*	*magazin*	***bar.***	
	1PL-GEN	village-LOC	shop	EX	
	‘There is a shop in our village.’				EXISTENTIAL
b.	*Mineŋ*	*mašina-m*	***bar.***		
	1SG.GEN	car-POSS1SG	EX		
	‘I have a car.’				POSSESSIVE
c.	*Mineŋ*	*kitab-əm*	*öθtäl-dä.*		
	1SG.GEN	book-POSS1SG	table-LOC		
	‘My book is on the table.’				LOCATIVE

In this context, it is worth noting that several Turkic languages spoken in Iran, e.g. Khorasan (kmz) and Khalaj (klj), pattern like Dolgan and Sakha. They likewise allow affirmative existential nominals in locative predications, as demonstrated by examples (41–42).

(41) Khorasan (Turkic, Oghuz; Karakoç 2009: 219, glossing adapted)
Ev-dä ***baːʼr-am.***
house-LOC **EX-1SG**
'I am at home.'

(42) Khalaj (Turkic, Khalaj; Karakoç 2009: 219, glossing adapted)
Iːraːn-ča ***vaːʼr-am.***
Iran-LOC **EX-1SG**
'I am in Iran.'

Karakoç (2009: 221–222) demonstrates that the usage of the existential nominal in locative predications, i.e. the existential takeover, in Turkic languages of Iran is a contact-induced pattern copied from Indo-Iranian. Not going into details of Indo-Iranian existential predications, this assumption seems plausible since the relevant Turkic varieties spoken in Iran belong to different branches of Turkic, Khalaj being argued to be a branch of its own (Johanson 2021: 21–23, 91–92). Given the general Turkic picture discussed above, the Khorasan and Khalaj patterns can hardly be traced back to a common origin. A parallel development without an external motivation is principally possible, but given the surrounding Indo-Iranian languages, which are dominant in either case, the contact-induced explanation is more solid.

Hence, both Dolgan/Sakha and the Turkic varieties spoken in Iran exhibit patterns of existential takeover, which developed independently. In the latter case, the takeover is most probably contact-induced, whereas this can be excluded in the former case since the surrounding languages of Dolgan and Sakha do not exhibit it either. Maybe, Mongolic languages might have influenced Pre-Dolgan-Sakha since they also show shared patterns of locative and existential predications (Janhunen 2003: 26–27). Still, this cannot be proven. Be the takeover process synchronic or diachronic, one can say that Dolgan and Sakha – as well as the Turkic varieties in Iran – exhibit existential nominals, constitutive for both existential and locative predications. In either case, synchronic and diachronic data prove that their existential reading is primary, so one must conclude that the existential nominals have spread to locative predication.

3.4.2. Negative existentials in Siberian languages

Before discussing negative existentials, some general properties of negated locative and existential predications must be clarified. Semantically, the negative sentence *the book is not on the table* can be relatively easily decomposed into its affirmative counterpart and a negative operator.[14] Pragmatically, however, the given utterance functions differently from its affirmative counterpart. It has long been noted (Givón 1978, Tottie 1991, Miestamo 2005, among others) that negative utterances are only felicitous in specific discourse contexts, which all implicitly or explicitly presuppose the affirmative counterpart of the utterance in question. Hence, *the book is not on the table* is pragmatically adequate only if the context somehow suggests that the book principally might be on the table (Miestamo 2005: 197–198). Regarding information structure, the relevant contexts often correlate with verum focus (43) or contrastive focus (44) constructions.

(43) A: *Can I have a look into the book you recently bought?*
B: *Sure, take it. It is on the table over there.*
A (looking for the book): *No, it is NOT on the table.*

(44) A: *Please, go and get me my diary from my desk.*
B (returning): *Here you are. However, it was not on the DESK, but on the SHELF.*

Given these pragmatic constraints, one should expect that negative locative predications are significantly less frequent than their affirmative counterparts. Indeed, this expectation holds: In the analysed material, there are 1,059 affirmative locative clauses but only 49 negative locative clauses (95.6% vs 4.4%). As for existential predications, the same tendencies can be observed, though the share of negative existential clauses is significantly higher in the analysed material: there are 2,625 affirmative existential clauses and 1,164 negative existential clauses (69.3% vs 30.7%). This can be explained by the central discourse function – the (re-)introduction of a discourse referent (see Section 2.1, Hengeveld 1992, Dryer 2007) – of existential

[14] Note that *decomposition* and *operator* must not be understood in formal semantic terms here, but only to illustrate the problem. Interestingly, some languages, e.g. Vietnamese, reflect this decomposed semantics in negative non-verbal predications, which literally can be translated “it is not true that…” (Eriksen 2011: 280; Veselinova & Hamari 2022: 43).

predications that is supposedly more compatible with negation than asserting a location to a given referent: When talking about a situation in general, it is often an equally adequate information that something is absent. In turn, this is more problematic when "zooming" on the absent referent, since its existence per se must not negated, but only its episodic presence, because it is necessarily presupposed and, thus, existing. Consequently, the amount of data to be analysed for negative existential takeover is quantitatively quite restricted. Still, the available data show evident patterns.

As shown in Section 3.3, all languages under discussion here use negative existential items to express negative existential predication, Kamas (45) again illustrating that. Additionally, all languages exhibit the same negative existential item in negative locative clauses, as displayed by Kamas (46).

(45) Kamas (Uralic, Samoyedic; INEL Kamas Corpus: PKZ_1964_SU0207.PKZ.094)
Ma?-nan *sazən* ***naga.***
tent-LAT/LOC.POSS2SG paper **NEG.EX**
'There is no paper at your home.'

(46) Kamas (Uralic, Samoyedic; INEL Kamas Corpus: PKZ_196X_AngryLady_flk.044)
Da *tăn* *gijen-də* *i* ***nago-bia-l*** […].
and.R 2SG where-INDEF and.R **NEG.EX-PST-2SG**
'But you haven't been anywhere, [you lived here].'

Taking the negative existential semantics of inter alia Kamas *naga* ~ *nago-* for granted, Kamas – as well as the other thirteen languages of the sample – appear to exhibit a systematic existential takeover in negative locative predications. However, it must be shown again that the negative existential items indeed have existential semantics. According to Veselinova (2013: 139) and Veselinova & Hamari (2022: 34–41), negative existential items are hardly mere negators of affirmative existentials but rather replace affirmative existentials; following Eriksen (2011: 281–283), they represent a "direct negation avoidance strategy". Thus, their semantics include both negation and 'existence', which leads to a reading of 'absence' (ibid.). Consequently, Veselinova & Hamari (2022) argue against the compositional semantics of negative

existentials. Going a step further, they take this assumption as a reason for the fact that negative existentials diachronically often trace back to sources like ‘lack’, ‘absent’ or ‘empty’ but are rarely formal compositions of a negative item and an affirmative existential (Veselinova & Hamari 2022: 38–39). This observation is also relevant to the topic under discussion here. Given a negative existential item with the initial meaning ‘lack’, which appears in negative locative and existential predications in language X, it can hardly be argued that locative predication is ontologically primary against existential predication in this language. Therefore, I analyse the negative existential items of the languages under discussion here from a diachronic perspective in what follows.

First, it can be stated that the data underpin Veselinova & Hamari’s (2022) claim that negative existentials often trace back to full lexical items indicating absence. Only the Yeniseian languages Ket and Yugh display a univerbation pattern, namely Ket *bənsaŋ* and Yugh *bəše*, which originate in the combination of the negative particle *bən* and the affirmative existentials *useŋ* and *uše*, respectively (Werner 1997: 215; Georg 2007: 314).

The Ob-Ugric languages Khanty and Mansi show the following negative existential items: Northern Khanty *antəːm* ~ *ăntɔm* ~ *antum*, Eastern Khanty *əntem* ~ *əntim*, Northern Mansi *atim*, Eastern Mansi *øɑ̯tʲi*, Western Mansi *oɒ̯tʲəm*, Tavda Mansi *iikəm*. As argued by Steinitz (1967: 123–124) and Veselinova (2015: 567–568), all forms trace back to a nominalisation of the Proto-Ob-Ugric negative auxiliary verb **ə-*. The nominal character of the forms can be shown by the need for a copula support item in non-present tense contexts (47). Regarding their semantics, the Northern Khanty lexicalisation *ăntɔma jĭ-* ‘die’, which literally means ‘become absent’ ~ ‘become non-existent’, neatly shows the negative existential’s semantic content (48; Steinitz 1967: 123).

(47) Eastern Khanty (Uralic, Ob-Ugric; OUDB Yugan Khanty (2010–) Corpus: Text 1615, 163)

tʲi	*puɯrnə*	*mɛŋk*	***ɛntem***	*tʲi*	***βoł.***
this	after	spirit	**NEG.EX**	so	**be.PST.3SG**

‘After this, there were no more Menks [= kind of spirit].’

(48) Northern Khanty (Uralic, Ob-Ugric; Steinitz 1967: 123)

[*χu*]	*ăntɔm-a*	*jĭ-s.*
man	NEG.EX-LAT	become-PST.3SG

‘[The man] died.’

The Samoyedic languages exhibit the following negative existential items: Nganasan *ďaŋku ~ ďaŋguj-*, Forest Enets *dʲago-*, Tundra Enets *dʲigu-*, Tundra Nenets *jəŋku-*, Forest Nenets *d'iku- ~ t'iku-*, Northern Selkup *č'ä:ŋki-*, Southern Selkup *t'äŋu-* and Kamas *naga ~ nago-*. Additionally, the extinct Samoyedic language Mator exhibits the verbal form *nagajga* (< *naga* 'NEG.EX' + *äj-* 'be' + the present tense co-affix *-ga*), which means 'there is not; there lacks' (Helimski 1997: 209, 312–313). According to Janhunen (1977: 40–41), all items can be traced back to Proto-Samoyedic **jänkV ~ jänkV-* meaning 'not, absence, missing; not be there, miss'. Apart from the usage in negative existential predications, there is only scarce evidence for initial existential semantics in the Samoyedic languages. However, the named Mator form *nagajga* can also be used to form caritive adjectives, such as, e.g. *teništa nagajga* 'stupid', literally meaning 'is without mind' (ibid.). This pattern is indeed an argument in favour of the initial existential semantics of the item since no ground element is included conceptionally. Surely, it is difficult to transfer this to the other Samoyedic languages since the latter do not exhibit similar patterns synchronically, so the Samoyedic negative existentials are not as clearly existential in their origin as could be shown for the Ob-Ugric languages. Still, an analogue interpretation is at least possible and plausible given that the diachronic source 'lack' for negative existentials is cross-linguistically widely attested (Veselinova 2013: 118–121). Another evidence for initial existential semantics can be provided by further derivations of the negative existential verb in Kamas, as displayed in (49). Here, the momentaneous derivation yields the reading 'disappear', which might be paraphrased as 'becoming absent', so the negative existential verb may also read as 'being absent'.

(49) Kamas (Uralic, Samoyedic; INEL Kamas Corpus: PKZ_196X_SU0225.241)

[…]	*i*	*sima-t*	***nago-lu?-pi.***
	and	eye-POSS3SG	**NEG.EX-MOM-PST.3SG**

'[She shot him in the eye with an arrow,] he lost his eye (lit. his eye disappeared).'

The Turkic and Tungusic languages under consideration again show more convincing evidence that the negative existential items have initial existential semantics. Dolgan *huo͡k*, Sakha *suo͡χ* and Chulym Turkic *čoːɣul* ultimately go back to the Common Turkic form **yoq* (Johanson 2021: 817). Like their affirmative counterparts, the Dolgan and Sakha forms even synchronically may function as nouns with the meaning 'lack;

absence', as discussed in Section 3.4.1 and again displayed in (50–51). So, following the same argumentation provided above, it can safely be stated that the Turkic negative existential items have initial existential semantics.

(50) Dolgan (Turkic, Northeastern; INEL Dolgan Corpus: PoPD_KuNS_2004_Life_conv.PoPD.106)

Urut	*otto*	*karči*	***huo͡g-u-ttan***	*ze*	[…].
earlier	then	money	**NEG.EX-POSS3SG-ABL**	EMPH.R	

'Earlier because of the lack of money, [if you want to do something, well… to help somebody, from what, you have no budget].'

(51) Sakha (Turkic, Northeastern; Böhtlingk 1851: 9)

[…]	*tu:s*	***suoɣ-u-ttan***	[…].
	salt	**NEG.EX-POSS3SG-ABL**	

'[These beautiful fish apparently get lost for two reasons:] The lack of salt [and because the people are used to it].'

Additionally, Dolgan exhibits the paraphrase *huo͡k buo͡l-* 'become absent' for 'die' (52), which – like in Khanty, discussed above – points to the existential semantics of *huo͡k*.

(52) Dolgan (Turkic, Northeastern; INEL Dolgan Corpus: KiES_KiLS_2009_Birth_nar.KiES.079)

"Kaja	*ogo-but*	***huo͡k***	***buo͡l-but",***	*d-i:l-ler*	*araj.*
well	child-POSS1PL	**NEG.EX**	**become-PST2.3SG**	say-PRS-3SG	just

'"Well, our child has died", they just say.'

The Tungusic languages Evenki and Even exhibit the negative existentials *a:čin* ~ *a:sin* and *ač'č'a* ~ *ač'*, respectively. They have cognates all over the Tungusic language family, although not all formal aspects are solved from a comparative point of view (Hölzl 2015: 134–135). As for the semantics of the negative existential nominals, two phenomena – which were already discussed for other languages of the sample – point to their initial existential semantics. First, they form translational equivalents of caritive adjectives, cf. the Even example (53). Second, their combination with the copula *o-* 'become' can yield the reading 'disappear' and 'die', as displayed by the Evenki examples (54–55).

(53) Even (Tungusic, Northern; Benzing 1955: 30, own glossing)
tar-al *asa-l* ***ač'*** ***hut-l-əː-səl.***
this-PL woman-PL **NEG.EX** **child-PL-PTV-PL**
'These women are childless.' ~ 'These women are without children.' ~ 'These women have no children.'

(54) Taimyr Evenki (Tungusic, Northern; INEL Evenki Corpus: NNR_190X_StrongBoy_flk.083)
[…] *taduk* ***ačin*** ***o-da-n.***
then **NEG.EX** **become-AOR-3SG**
'[So the small human said,] then he disappeared.'

(55) Northern Evenki (Tungusic, Northern; INEL Evenki Corpus: ChAD_20180923_BurbotsEvenks_flk.ChAD.010)
[…] *dəg-il,* *bəjŋ-ol* ***aːsin*** ***oː-da.***
bird-PL animal-PL **NEG.EX** **become-AOR.3PL**
'[All inhabitants of the world,] birds and animals, died.'

Putting the discussion in a nutshell, one must conclude that all negative existential items display initial existential semantics. This is well in line with Veselinova & Hamari's (2022) assumption that negative existentials are not only negators of affirmative existentials but compose negative and existential semantics. Given this, their appearance in locative predications must be analysed as secondary, which is, thus, another argument in favour of the "existential takeover"-analysis. Sections 4 and 5 discuss which implications this pattern has for the analysis and typology of locative and existential predication in general.

4. Existential takeover: markedness, frequency, complexity and salience

Starting from the information-structural and cognitive patterns described in Section 2.1, many authors implicitly or explicitly assume locative predication is unmarked and existential predication is marked. Taking this for granted and considering the functional approach discussed in Section 2.1, it is not far to seek to establish Hengeveld's (1992: 118–121) [±presentative] as the markedness exponent for

locative and existential predications. Following this approach, locative predication is unmarked ([-presentative]), and existential predication is marked ([+presentative]).

However, neither the term *markedness* nor the concept designated by it is uncontroversial, as described inter alia by Haspelmath (2006) and Bybee (2011). Opposed to the wide and often fuzzy use of the term, I narrow it here to a rather traditional reading, namely the presence or absence of a phonological or semantic feature (Haspelmath 2006: 26; Bybee 2011: 137–138, 141–142). According to Greenberg (2005[1966]: 14, 31) and Bybee (2011: 143–144), the central property associated with markedness is text frequency: marked items appear less frequently in texts than their unmarked counterparts. Furthermore, it is widely accepted that the markedness of a given linguistic structure has several corollaries that predict its linguistic behaviour, which I briefly discuss in what follows.

First, marked items tend to be formally more complex than their unmarked counterparts. This phenomenon is especially well visible in phonology since the higher complexity of an item can be measured in terms of the physical effort the speaker has to take to produce it (Greenberg 2005[1966]: 70). But also in morphosyntax, marked items are, as a tendency, more complex than their unmarked counterparts, as, e.g. English comparative and superlative forms of adjectives, cf. *big* ~ *bigger* ~ *biggest* (Bybee 2011: 143–144). These forms additionally show another tendency. If there is zero-expression in a given domain, it is the unmarked structure exhibiting it, e.g. the English positive degree of adjectives displayed above or the singular form of count nouns, e.g. English *book*-Ø opposed to plural *book-s* (Greenberg 2005[1966]: 26–27; Bybee 2011: 143). Finally, if the formal distinction of unmarked and marked items is levelled, as a tendency, the unmarked structure is generalised. E.g., in the regularisation of English past tense forms, e.g. *weep* ~ *weep-ed* instead of *weep* ~ *wept*, the less marked present-tense stem spreads to the past tense (Bybee 2011: 135) and not the other way around. Finally, Bybee (ibid.) points out that children learn unmarked before marked structures in first-language acquisition.

Applying these corollaries of markedness distinctions to locative and existential predication, we should expect the following tendencies:

1) Locative predication as the unmarked structure is more frequent in natural language than existential predication as the more marked structure.

2) The linguistic expressions of existential predication are, as a tendency, more complex than the linguistic expressions of locative predication.

3) If one of the predication types exhibits a kind of zero expression, e.g. a zero copula, it is expected to appear in locative predication.

4) If one of the correlating linguistic structures is generalised, the locative predication structure is expected to spread to existential predication and not vice versa.

5) Children are expected to acquire locative predication before existential predication.

Discussing the issues (1) – (4), I will critically assess whether a markedness-based approach to the distinction of locative and existential predication is feasible and leads to good results.

The cases of existential takeover, amply described in Section 3, challenge the described markedness-based approach to locative and existential predication with the markedness exponent [±presentative] radically. Both affirmative and negative existential items appear systematically as linking elements of locative clauses in the analysed languages from Northern Siberia. Both synchronic and diachronic data can convincingly prove the initial existential semantics of the items. So, arguing from this perspective, existential predications are by no means more marked than their locative counterparts in the analysed languages but regularly serve as the base for co-expression patterns. Fair enough, one or two counterexamples do not suffice for overturning a cross-linguistically observed correlation completely, and indeed, many languages – such as Finnish, as shown in Section 1 – generalise their locative clause structure to existential clauses. However, given the lack of a general typology of locative and existential predication (see Section 2.2), no empirically valid conclusions about the cross-linguistic frequency of locative and existential takeover, respectively, can be drawn by now. Note additionally that also Creissels (2019: 61) points to a seemingly similar case of existential takeover in Juba-Arabic (pga; Arabic-based creole spoken in Sudan). Given this, I emphasise here that further language-specific and cross-linguistic studies of these takeover patterns are highly demanded.

Besides the existential takeover patterns, the analysed language data provide another evidence relevant to the question of whether markedness plays a role in the distinction of locative and existential predication. Above, it was argued that the critical feature of unmarked linguistic structures is their high textual frequency. Consequently, assuming existential predications being marked against locative predications entails the expectation that locative predications are more

frequent in natural language than existential predications. The analysed data, however, again contradict this expectation. As Table 2 shows, existential predications are, as a rule, more frequent than locative predications; in many languages, they are twice, thrice or even four times as frequent.

	LOCATIVE				EXISTENTIAL			
	ABSOLUTE	RELATIVE	95% CI	99% CI	ABSOLUTE	RELATIVE	95% CI	99% CI
Khanty	97	24.0%	19.8% – 28.2%	18.5% – 29.5%	307	76.0%	71.8% – 80.2%	70.5% – 81.5%
Mansi	40	16.7%	12.0% – 21.4%	10.5% – 22.9%	199	83.3%	78.6% – 88.0%	77.1% – 89.5%
Nenets	61	18.4%	14.2% – 22.6%	12.9% – 23.9%	270	81.6%	77.4% – 85.8%	76.1% – 87.1%
Enets	96	33.4%	27.9% – 38.9%	26.2% – 40.6%	191	66.6%	61.1% – 72.1%	59.4% – 73.8%
Ngana-san	86	30.0%	24.7% – 35.3%	23.0% – 37.0%	201	70.0%	64.7% – 75.3%	63.0% – 77.0%
Selkup	131	26.0%	22.2% – 29.8%	21.0% – 31.0%	372	74.0%	70.2% – 77.8%	69.0% – 79.0%
Kamas	74	17.0%	13.5% – 20.5%	12.4% – 21.6%	361	83.0%	79.5% – 86.5%	78.4% – 87.6%
Sakha	44	20.9%	15.4% – 26.4%	13.7% – 28.1%	167	79.1%	73.6% – 84.6%	71.9% – 86.3%
Dolgan	181	20.9%	18.2% – 23.6%	17.3% – 24.5%	686	79.1%	76.4% – 81.8%	75.5% – 82.7%
Chulym	31	16.9%	11.5% – 22.3%	9.8% – 24.0%	152	83.1%	77.7% – 88.5%	76.0% – 90.2%
Evenki	77	19.5%	15.6% – 23.4%	14.4% – 24.6%	317	80.5%	76.6% – 84.4%	75.4% – 85.6%
Even	92	23.7%	19.5% – 27.9%	18.1% – 29.3%	297	76.3%	72.1% – 80.5%	70.7% – 81.9%
Ket	80	24.9%	20.2% – 29.6%	18.7% – 31.1%	241	75.1%	71.4% – 79.8%	68.9% – 81.3%
Yugh	18	37.5%	23.7% – 51.3%	19.3% – 55.7%	29	62.5%	48.7% – 76.3%	44.3% – 80.7%

Table 2: Number of locative and existential predications.

More technically speaking, in most datasets of the analysed languages, existential predications outnumber locative predications significantly, relying on 99%

confidence intervals. This does not hold for the Yugh dataset, whose 99% confidence interval is 36.4% around *p*, due to its small basic population. Still, also Yugh displays almost twice as many existential than locative clauses, which underlines the overall tendencies at least impressionistically; additionally, the Yugh data are statistically significant if relying on weaker 90% confidence intervals (LOC: 25.9% – 49.1%; EX: 50.9% – 74.1%).

As a disclaimer, it must be acknowledged that most datasets are biased towards folklore and other narrative texts. So, it cannot be excluded that the observed frequency patterns are symptomatic for this genre but may differ in different genres and domains of natural speech. However, the Dolgan dataset may count as a control set inasmuch the source database, the INEL Dolgan Corpus, also contains a significant amount of free conversations, the utterances included in them making up just under 25 per cent of the utterances in the whole corpus (3,221 out of 14,078). Table 3 shows that the relative number of locative predications is slightly higher in conversations than in narrative texts but not significantly from a statistical point of view when relying on a 95% confidence interval.

	LOCATIVE			EXISTENTIAL		
	ABSOLUTE	RELATIVE	95% CI	ABSOLUTE	RELATIVE	95% CI
conversations	65	24.5%	19.3% – 29.7%	200	75.5%	70.3% – 80.7%
non-conversations	116	19.3%	16.1% – 22.5%	486	80.7%	77.5% – 83.9%

Table 3: Number of locative and existential predications – Genres in Dolgan.

So, it can carefully be concluded that the genre of a text does not play a significant role regarding the text frequency of locative and existential predications. Even if assuming that the conversational data represent the "truth" better than the non-conversational data, existential clauses are still more than twice as frequent as locative clauses. Therefore, I assume that existential predications are more frequent in natural speech than locative predications. This conclusion again tackles assuming existential predications being marked opposed to locative predication.

Instead, taking a markedness opposition as such for granted, two criteria – the observed Siberian generalisation patterns and text frequency – would predict locative predications being marked and existential predications being functionally unmarked.

A third criterion, the degree of complexity of the correlating linguistic structures, in turn, still points towards deeming existential predications marked. As a rule, existential clauses are more complex than their locative counterparts on both a morphosyntactic and pragmatic level. Although often used without further ado, the term *complexity* needs a definition to clarify what the following discussion is about. Investigating the linguistic expressions of locative and existential predication, I talk about formal complexity here, i.e., about linguistic units, and not functional complexity. Following Rescher (1998) and Karlsson et al. (2008), I conceive complexity as being measured by (1) the number of units included in an item (*hippopotamus* is phonologically more complex than *frog*; *the cute cat* is morphosyntactically more complex than *cat*) and (2) the variety of units included in an item (*was going* is more complex than *went*, because it expresses progressive aspect in addition to past tense). Functionally, a high degree of formal complexity leads to high salience in discourse (Boswijk & Coler 2020).

Following this approach to linguistic complexity, there is ample evidence that existential items and existential clauses, as a rule, are more complex than their locative counterparts. English and French provide good initial examples of this pattern. Whereas locative clauses contain forms of the copula verbs *be* and *être*, respectively, it is the analytic constructions *there is* and *il y a*, respectively, in existential predication. In either case, expletive elements make the existential construction more complex than the locative construction. As for the languages under consideration here, a similar observation can be made for those languages which include existential items in existential clauses, i.e. Chulym Turkic, Yeniseian and Northern Samoyedic.[15] In Chulym Turkic, locative clauses display a zero copula, whereas existential clauses include the existential item *par* (56–57). The Yeniseian languages generally function likewise; however, the person and number of the figure may be cross-referred in locative clauses, as in Ket (58–59). In either case, the existential clause is more complex since it contains more free morphemes and more phonetic material.

(56) Chulym (Turkic, Northeastern; Filchenko et al. 2012: 204–205)

ämdä	*olar*	*kat-tiir-i*	*äp-teer-in-dä.*
now	3PL	wife-PL-POSS3	house-PL-POSS3-LOC

‘Now, they [and] their wives are in their house.’

[15] I leave out the cases of existential takeover here because the degree of (morphological) complexity is certainly the same in either type of predication if there is the same linking item.

(57) Chulym (Turkic, Northeastern; Filchenko 2016-2019: KondiyakovAF_04July2016_Interview-1.75)

pis-tiŋ	*al-ïvs-ta*	*kömäs*	*koɣur*	*kizi-lär*	***par.***
1PL-GEN	village-POSS1PL-LOC	few	lazy	person-PL	**EX**

'In our village, there are few lazy people.'

(58) Central Ket (Yeniseian; Dul'zon 1971: 122)

ət	*qa-**reŋ**,*
1PL.PRO	at.home-**1PL**

'We are at home.'

(59) Southern Ket (Yeniseian; Siberian Lang: glosses_kel05_baldingm_mordushka_0-29)

is',	*is'*	*χat*	***us'en'.***
fish	fish	there	**EX**

'There is fish there.'

The Northern Samoyedic data are slightly more complex to analyse. In Nganasan, for example, locative clauses contain the copula verb *i-*, whereas existential clauses are formed with the existential verbs *təi-* and *tənij-* (Wagner-Nagy 2019: 354–355; 357). From a phonetic point of view, the existential verbs are clearly more complex than the copula verb. Additionally, the existential verb traces back to the combination of the demonstrative stem *tə-* and the demonstrative adverb *təni* 'there', respectively, with the copula verb *i-*, so existential clauses are actually equative clauses from a diachronic point of view (60). Equative clauses, in turn, are a typical means for expressing existential clauses, as, e.g. in Icelandic (isl; Indo-European, Germanic) (61), where they are opposed to locative clauses formed with the simple copula verb *vera* (Creissels 2019: 79–80). Summing up this argumentation, Nganasan – and, similarly, the other Northern Samoyedic languages – also provide evidence that existential clauses are more complex than locative clauses.

(60) Nganasan (Uralic, Samoyedic; INEL Nganasan Corpus: TKF_031118_War_nar.50)

tahar͡iabə	*təndə*	*sʲiti*	*bəŋgüʔtüə*	*təi-ču*	*(<tə-i-ču).*
now	there	two	burrow	EX-AOR.3SG	(that-be-AOR.3SG)

'Now, there are two burrows.' (< lit. 'Now, that is two burrows there.')

(61) Icelandic (Indo-European, Germanic; Creissels 2019: 79)
Það eru mys í baðkerinu.
that are mice in bathtub
'There are mice in the bathtub.' (lit. 'That are mice in the bathtub.')

The languages discussed so far distinguish locative from existential clauses by the linking element, which allows a comparably simple analysis of their complexity. But, as Creissels (2019) mentioned, there are many languages in which the linking element is one and the same in either construction. So, the linking element itself and its syntactic structure cannot indicate the complexity of the construction. In the analysed language sample, the Ob-Ugric (Khanty, Mansi), the Southern Samoyedic (Selkup, Kamas), two Turkic (Dolgan, Sakha) and the Tungusic (Evenki, Even) languages display this type, i.e. there is no morphosyntactic distinction of locative and existential predications. As a case in point, Northern Mansi displays the present-tense, third-person singular form of the copula verb in either sentence of (62–63).

(62) Northern Mansi (Uralic, Ob-Ugric; OUDB Northern Mansi Corpus: Text 1238, 016)
eːkʷa piːrisʲ jun ***oːl-i.***
Ekwa Piris at.home **be-PRS.3SG**
'Ekwa Piris is at home.'

(63) Northern Mansi (Uralic, Ob-Ugric; OUDB Northern Mansi Corpus: Text 1237, 003)
tit aːs waːta-t uːs ***oːl-i.***
here Ob bank-LOC town **be-PRS.3SG**
'There is a town on the bank of the Ob [river].'

Only word order distinguishes the two readings here, which evokes the question of whether there is evidence to analyse the word order in the existential clause (63) as more complex than the word order in the locative clause (62). When looking barely at the morphosyntax of these clauses, there is no indication that this would be the case. However, their information structure also points towards the existential clause being more complex than the locative clause. As discussed in Section 2.1, locative clauses usually show predicate or argument focus patterns, whereas existential clauses

exhibit sentence focus, which is why they are suitable for introducing new referents into the discourse. Following Lambrecht (1994: 222, 234–235) and Bentley et al. (2015: 43–44), sentence focus structures necessarily have the subject of the clause included in the focus domain. As a corollary, the subject is not topical. Given that subjects generally tend to be topical, yielding a parallel subject-predicate and topic-comment structure, it can be argued that sentence focus structures are more complex from an information-structural point of view than predicate or argument focus structures. Applied to the Mansi examples, this means that the topic-comment and subject-predicate structures are aligned in (62) (*e:k^{w}a pi:ris^{j}* 'Ekwa Piris' is both subject and topic), whereas in (63), *tit a:s wa:tat* 'on the bank of the Ob' is the topic, and *u:s* 'town' is the subject. Understanding information structure as a part of the syntax of the clause, (63) is, thus, syntactically more complex than (62).

Whereas the languages under investigation here provide only indirect evidence for this assumption, other languages are more expressive in this respect. One example of them is Finnish. In Finnish existential clauses, as well as in other clauses with sentence focus, a plural subject is marked with the partitive case and does not agree with the verb, as displayed in (64a) and (64c). In the correlating predicate focus structures, in turn, the subject stands in the nominative case and agrees with the verb, as displayed in (64b) and (64d). Consequently, the more complex information structure of (64a) and (64c) is also reflected in their morphosyntactic realisation, namely by additional case marking and missing person-number agreement.

(64) Finnish (Uralic, Finnic; personal knowledge)

a.	*Pöydä-llä*	*on*	*kirjo-j-a.*	EXISTENTIAL CLAUSE,
	table-ADE	be.3SG	book-PL-PTV	SENTENCE FOCUS
	'There are books on the table.'			
b.	*Kirja-t*	*o-vat*	*pöydä-llä.*	LOCATIVE CLAUSE,
	book-PL.NOM	be-3PL	table-ADE	PREDICATE FOCUS
	'The books are on the table.'			
c.	*Kadu-lla*	*leikki-i*	*laps-i-a.*	VERBAL INTRANSITIVE CLAUSE,
	street-ADE	play-3SG	child-PL-PTV	SENTENCE FOCUS
	'There are children playing in the street.'			
d.	*Lapse-t*	*leikki-vät*	*kadu-lla.*	VERBAL INTRANSITIVE CLAUSE,
	child-PL.NOM	play-3PL	street-ADE	PREDICATE FOCUS
	'The children are playing in the street.'			

When now combining the criteria “text frequency” and “generalisation in co-expression patterns” with the criterion “complexity” to assess the markedness of locative and existential predications, they contradict each other. The higher text frequency of existential predications predicts that they represent the unmarked item of a markedness opposition. In contrast, their higher complexity indicates that they represent the marked item. Since both locative and existential patterns can be generalised in the case of co-expression, this criterion is not finally expressive for determining the unmarked item of a markedness opposition.

As a possible alternative to this ‘dilemma’, I argue that the observations do not contradict each other per se. Starting from the assumption that locative and existential predications share their propositional content, a language has the “task” to disambiguate the possible readings – locative vs existential – by the grammatical means the language has. There is no default strategy for this disambiguation, as Creissels (2019) convincingly shows, but a wide variation can be observed. Still, the discourse-pragmatic functions of existential predications, (re-)introducing referents and structuring a discourse, make them more salient than locative predications, so the linguistic expressions of existential predications are often, though not necessarily, more complex. Acknowledging the higher salience of existential predications, it is not surprising that they are more frequent than locative predications. As discussed above, existential predications are needed for structuring a discourse, whereas locative predications cannot fulfil this function.

Given this, these characteristics and distinctions of locative and existential predications do not need a markedness-based opposition as an explanation when understanding *markedness* as the presence or absence of a phonetic or semantic feature (see above). Instead, both types of predication share their propositional content but differ in their perspective structure, so they are discriminated against each other in the given linguistic context. Formally, this is often – but not necessarily – instantiated by means of information structure. So, the semantically identical locative and existential predications merely serve different pragmatic domains, which is again an argument against assuming a markedness-based opposition.

5. Typological implications

The essence of the discussion in the preceding sections is that locative and existential predications do not exhibit a markedness opposition. Therefore, locative predications

must not be regarded as the unmarked structure from which a typology of locative and existential predication starts. In other words, there must not be any a priori restrictions, which items may occur in either type of predication; especially, the appearance of existential items in locative predication must be acknowledged. Still, they should be accounted for as two separate domains since their functional load heavily differs.

To capture all essential aspects of the linguistic expression of locative and existential predications, I propose a two-layered typology of locative and existential predication. At the first layer, the expressions of locative and existential predication are analysed and typologised independently. Here, the linking element is central to the typology since it displays most variation, whereas the coding of the figure and ground referents is already predetermined by the spatial figure-ground relationship expressed. Thus, Ket locative predications may be typologised as containing a zero copula with pn-agreement at the figure, whereas Ket existential predications may be analysed as containing an existential item/copula. Obviously, the typology itself needs a lot of elaboration, which may take the approaches discussed in Section 2.2 as its starting point. From a comparative and typological point of view, this layer of the typology makes a cross-linguistic study of the comparative concepts of "locative predication" and "existential predication" possible.

So far, the typology does not account for the tight interaction of locative and existential predication, formally reflected in many languages. Taking up the very initial step of Creissels' (2019) typology, the second layer of my proposed typology shall analyse how the linguistic expressions of locative and existential predications in a language are related to each other. In other words, it shall be analysed whether this language has co-expression patterns and, if applicable, how the morphosyntactic ambiguity is resolved, e.g. by word order permutations, different intonation contours or the like. Additionally, if needed for the relevant research purpose, it might be analysed whether the observed structure is existential in its origin, e.g. sharing its structure with generic existentials, having the same structure as other types of non-verbal predication, etc. To put this in a nutshell, the second layer of the typology shall make a cross-linguistic analysis of the (non-)co-expression patterns of locative and existential predication possible.

From my point of view, such a two-layered typology can overcome the methodological problems observed in Section 2.2. Most importantly, it is unbiased towards any linguistic expression of locative and existential predication. Furthermore,

it does not use the highly debated concept of markedness but relies on a functional approach to the semantics and pragmatics of the discussed predication types. Consequently, the typology – when appropriately elaborated – should be able to capture any language data showing instances of locative and existential predications, not excluding any of them by a priori restrictions.

6. Conclusions and further outlook

The initial observation of this paper was that fourteen Siberian languages exhibit existential items and structures in the linguistic expression of locative predication, that is, in locative clauses. This phenomenon was called "existential takeover". Subsequently, it was argued that a markedness-based approach to locative and existential predication is not appropriate since it makes contradictory predictions. The zero hypothesis of marked existential predications would predict the spread of the locative clause patterns in the case of formal neutralization, which is tackled by the instances of existential takeover discussed in this paper. Additionally, and perhaps even more importantly, it was shown that the parameters of textual frequency and complexity contradict each other, when being applied to determining the (un)markedness of locative and existential predications. Existential predications are, as a rule, significantly more frequent than locative predications which would entail them being the unmarked item of the opposition, whereas their higher complexity would entail them being the marked item. Consequently, it is hardly feasible to account for locative and existential predication in terms of a markedness opposition.

Instead, locative and existential predications share their propositional content, either of them expressing the presence or absence of a figure in a ground. Pragmatically, they are distinguished by opposing perspectivisation patterns, which result in a different information-structural configuration. Locative predications are perspectivised from the figure to the ground and exhibit predicate or argument focus, whereas existential predications provide a perspective on the whole situation, which correlates with sentence focus.

Following this, it is argued that a general typology of locative and existential predication must not assume either type as primary or unmarked. As described in Section 5, I propose a two-layered model of such a typology. The first layer describes the linguistic structures themselves and the second layer describes their interplay and possible co-expression patterns. Obviously, this proposed typology needs much

further elaboration. The approaches presented in Section 2.2 can serve well as a starting point but must definitely be fed with sufficient cross-linguistic data.

Finally, I would like to draw attention to a general issue in linguistic typology, namely the co-existence of two or more linguistic structures for the expression of a given comparative concept. Take, for example, the Chulym Turkic examples (24–27) in Section 3.3, which showed that negative locative and existential predications are formed by the negative existential *čok* ~ *čoɣul* in TAME-unmarked forms, but by the copula *pol-* ~ *bol-* in TAME-marked forms. From my point of view, both patterns must be included in a typology since neither context is a "better" representative of Chulym Turkic. Instead, one can posit a TAME-based split, as done by, e.g. Stassen (1997). In this context, the observed languages point to another feature, which cannot be analysed in detail here but should probably be acknowledged in a general typology of locative and existential predication. Almost all of them display a polarity split to some extent, so affirmative and negative structures are formed differently. As a case in point, the Southern Samoyedic languages Selkup and Kamas use a copula in affirmative locative and existential clauses but a negative existential item in their negative counterparts (see Section 3.3). To my knowledge, such a polarity split is not systematically acknowledged yet in the study of locative and existential predication. Still, it is probably a relevant factor judging on the base of the analysed Siberian languages. However, this goes far beyond the scope of this paper and must be postponed for further research.

In summary, the paper at hand may serve two independent but interwoven purposes. First, it adds knowledge to the description of locative and existential predication in Siberian languages. Second, it argues to clarify some theoretical issues of locative and existential predication and may, thus, serve as the starting point for the design and development of a general typology of locative and existential predication.

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Abbreviations

1 = 1st person
2 = 2nd person
3 = 3rd person
ABL = ablative
ACC = accusative
ADE = adessive
ADM = admonitive
AOR = aorist
AUX = auxiliary
CO = co-affix
COND = conditional
CVB = converb
DAT = dative
DIST = distal
DU = dual
EMPH = emphatic
EVID = evidential
EX = existential
FUT = future
GEN = genitive
HAB = habitual
INDEF = indefinite
INF = infinitive
LAT = lative
LOC = locative
MOM = momentaneous
MULT = multiple action
N = neuter
NEG = negative
NOM = nominative
OPT = optative
ORD = ordinal numeral
PL = plural
POSS = possessive
PROL = prolative
PRS = present
PST = past
PTCP = participle
PTV = partitive
R = Russian copy
RFL = reflexive
SEQ = sequential
SG = singular
VOC = vocative

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