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CONDITIONAL CONVERB OF THE VERB ‘SAY’ AS A CONDITIONAL MARKER IN FOREST ENETS

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Abstract. In Forest Enets conditional constructions, the protasis clause is typically headed by a conditional converb. The conditional converb of the verb *man-* ‘say’ also serves as a conditional marker in the form *mab* or *mabut*, which is typically used along with the lexical predicate in a finite form. This corpus-based study aims to explore the properties of the marker *mab*(*ut*). I analyse the differences in its use by Forest Enets speakers of two generations and propose a scenario for the development of this marker. I examine its distribution with respect to phonological form, possessive marking, and position in the clause, as well as the aspectual properties of the constructions in which it features. The proposed source of the marker is a construction with the meaning ‘you might say’, which originally introduced an event in the following clause as a potential example and later developed into a clause-connecting particle.

Keywords: conditional constructions, conditional converb, speech verbs, grammaticalization, Forest Enets, discourse marker

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1. Introduction

Forest Enets belongs to the Samoyedic branch of the Uralic language family. It is currently spoken by no more than 30 people living in the North of Krasnoyarsk Krai in Central Siberia. Traditionally, Forest Enets was regarded as one of the two dialects of the Enets language, along with Tundra Enets, see, e.g., Sorokina (2010: 7–8), but in more recent works the two varieties tend to be treated as closely related languages (Khanina & Shluinsky 2023: 793).

This study examines those Forest Enets conditional constructions where the conditional converb *mab* or *mabut* of the verb *man-* 'say' is used as a conditional marker, as in (1).[1]

(1) *ɔlaj-da* ***ma-b*** *tɔnee,*
leftover-OBL.SG.3SG say(PFV)-COND exist(IPFV).3SG.S
kudaxaa-d *n'i* *kanus*
far.away-LAT.SG NEG.3SG.S leave(IPFV).CNG
'If it has leftovers, it does not go far away.'
[SNI_2010_StoriesBearsWolves_nar 501.1] (young)

This construction will be compared to the default type of Forest Enets conditional construction, where the conditional clause is headed by a conditional converb with the marker *-buʔ* or *-bune* (2).

(2) *bɛse-ku-d* ***tɔnee-buʔ,*** *bɛse-ku-d*
iron-DIM-OBL.SG.2SG exist(IPFV)-COND iron-DIM-OBL.SG.2SG
kado-ta *čukči*
take.away(PFV)-FUT.3SG.S all
'If you have money, he will take all your money.' [PNS_1994_HowDyoaLooks1_nar 30–31] (old)

The goal of the study is to trace the diachronic development of the conditional marker on the basis of the conditional converb of the verb *man-* 'say'. I will show that this marker is likely to be a relatively recent development and that there has been a change in its use over time. To show this, I will compare the use of this marker by two generations of Forest Enets speakers. Finally, I will propose a possible pathway of grammatical development of this function, based on the functions of the Enets conditional converb and typological parallels.

The paper is structured as follows. Section 2 provides some theoretical background on conditional constructions and gives an overview of the major type of conditional constructions in Forest Enets. In section 3, I describe the composition of the corpus used for the study and introduce the distinction I draw between the two generations of Forest

1 For the sake of readability, the conditional clause in all examples is separated off by a comma. References to examples from the text corpus contain the initials of the speaker, the time of recording, the title and the type of the text, and the sentence number. I also indicate whether the speaker belongs to the "older" or to the "younger" generation, as defined in section 3. For more details on the corpus see section 3.

Enets speakers. In section 4, I present the results of the corpus study analyzing the grammatical properties of the conditional marker based on the verb *man-* ‘say’. In section 5, I propose a grammaticalization pathway for this marker against the areal and typological background. Section 6 briefly summarizes the main findings of the paper.

2. Conditional constructions in Forest Enets and beyond

The linguistic definition of conditional constructions often takes as its departure point the notion of conditionals (material implications) in logic (see Comrie 1986; Podlesskaya 2001: 998). The latter is defined as “a relation between two propositions, the protasis (*p*) and the apodosis (*q*), such that either *p* and *q* are both true, or *p* is false and *q* is true, or *p* is false and *q* is false; excluded is the possibility of *p* being true while *q* is false” (Comrie 1986: 78). To adequately describe conditional constructions in natural language this definition needs some further elaboration. In particular, in contrast to logic, in natural language there has to be a causal relation between the two propositions, so that the apodosis can be viewed as somehow caused by the protasis (Comrie 1986: 80–82). Athanasiadou & Dirven (1997) more cautiously describe this relation between propositions as that of mutual dependency, as the apodosis can be a more or less direct consequence of the protasis. For instance, in (3) from Forest Enets the throwing of the iron by the bear is the direct cause of the noise, whereas in (4) the protasis conditions rather than causes the situation described in the apodosis.

(3) *bɛse* ***bɛɛ-bu-ta,*** *bɛse-r*
iron throw(PFV)-COND-OBL.SG.3SG iron-NOM.SG.2SG
n’i-uʔ *monu-t*
NEG-3SG.S.CONT thunder(IPFV)-FUT
‘If it [the bear] throws iron, the iron will thunder, after all.’ [BLD_2008_PreservingFish_nar.49] (young)

(4) *ɔns=ej* ***d’iri-bu-t,*** *sɛju-r*
really=EXCL live(IPFV)-COND-OBL.SG.2SG heart-NOM.SG.2SG
tezaʔ *kano-t* *n’i-uʔ*
now leave(PFV)-FUT.CNG NEG-3SG.S.CONT
‘If you are really alive, you will be frightened now.’
[BVN_1992_ThreeBrothers_flk] (old)

Another feature included in the linguistic definition of conditional constructions is that they make no commitment as to the fulfillment of the situations described in protasis and apodosis: that is to say, these propositions are not stated to be true (Comrie 1986: 79; Podlesskaya 2001: 999). For instance, although the protasis in (4) describes a situation with present temporal reference it does not state that this situation holds in reality. There is some debate in the literature as to whether all types of conditionals are characterized by this feature. In particular, Athanasiadou & Dirven (1997: 61) discuss "course of events conditionals, in which two regularly co-occurring events or states are reported". These constructions can describe relations either between generic events, such as natural phenomena in (5), or between habitual situations which regularly co-occur (6).

(5) *tɛxɛ* *sira-da* ***kaʔa-b***, *ŋul'i*
that snow-OBL.SG.3SG go.down(PFV)-COND very
kezeru-t *či* *oka* *ɛ-obi*
wild.reindeer-OBL.PL.2SG here's many be-HAB.3SG.S
'When the snow falls the wild reindeer tend to be very numerous.'
[SNI_2010_ReindeerPoleTips_nar 65] (young)

(6) *kudaxaa-j* *d'a-xan* ***d'iri-bu-ta***,
far.away-ADJ earth-LOC.SG live(IPFV)-COND-OBL.SG.3SG
sɛga-da
overnight(PFV)-FUT.3SG.S
'If she lives far away, she stays for the night.'
[BED_BNN_1991_MyLife_nar 171] (old)

Athanasiadou & Dirven (1997: 61) argue that in such constructions both the protasis and apodosis are entailed, i.e. stated to be true. Their analysis contradicts that of Comrie (1986: 89), who claims that "a conditional never expresses the factuality of either of its constituent propositions", and for whom the fact that some conditionals are understood as factual or counterfactual is a conversational implicature rather than a part of the semantics of these constructions. Comrie suggests that all conditional constructions share the same feature of hypotheticality of the two situations but differ with respect to the degree of this hypotheticality, and in the case of constructions like (5)–(6) the degree of hypotheticality is low.

The lack of consensus as to the features necessary for the linguistic definition of conditionals is one of the reasons why there exists no universally valid typology of conditional constructions, see the possible classifications in Podlesskaya (2001: 998–999) and Thompson, Longacre & Hwang (2007: 256). However, irrespective of the number and the mutual relationship of these types, it is clear that languages carve up the semantic domain of conditionality in different ways and employ various means for distinguishing between types of conditional construction.

Forest Enets conditional constructions are described in Sorokina (2010: 348), Siegl (2013: 440–445) and in an overview of Enets clause linkage by Shluinsky & Wagner-Nagy (2024: 62–67). In Forest Enets, the major strategy of protasis marking in conditional constructions is the conditional converb with the marker *-buʔ* (with shortened variant *-b*) or *-bune*, see the two forms in (7).

(7) *nara-nojuʔ, man’, **to-bune-duʔ**, axa,*
spring-ADV say come(PFV)-COND-OBL.SG.3PL aha
***leu-bu-tuʔ**, čiki-z man’*
cry(IPFV)-COND-OBL.SG.3PL his-NOM.PL.2SG say
zdɔrɔvajta-goɔ-ʔ
greet(PFV)-DUR-3PL.S
‘In spring, say, when they come, when they cry, say, they say hello.’
[BLD_2010_NicknameGoose_nar 25] (young)

Sorokina (2010: 346) describes the marker *-bune* as used for a condition temporally preceding the future event denoted by the main clause. According to Siegl (2013: 441), constructions with this marker have “a hypothetical interpretation with future reference”. However, the corpus data do not lend support to these analyses,[2] cf. (7) with a generic event in the conditional clause. A preliminary investigation shows that the choice between *-buʔ* and *-bune* is statistically associated with the type of construction, specific verbal lexemes, and the phonological structure of the root, but there seem to be no categorical restrictions on the use of either of the variants. For this reason, the markers *-buʔ* and *-bune*

2 In her paper on the cognate conditional converb in Forest and Tundra Nenets, Burkova (2004: 157–167) also finds no evidence for temporal reference or construction type as factors determining the distribution of the corresponding formal variants.

are regarded here as variants of a single marker, see also Shluinsky & Wagner-Nagy (2024: 36–38).

The conditional converb can be used in conditional constructions of all types, irrespective of temporal reference and degree of hypotheticality. Examples (5)–(7) above show its use in habitual/generic conditionals, in example (8) this converb refers to a hypothetical event in the future, and (9) is an example of a counterfactual conditional construction.

(8) *ɔčiko-ɔn, man-ʔ n'i-uʔ,*
bad-ADV say(PFV)-CNG NEG-3SG.S.CONT
***d'iri-bune-d**, kere-t to-za-d*
live(IPFV)-COND-OBL.SG.2SG self-OBL.SG.2SG come(PFV)-FUT-2SG.S
'If you live miserably, she said, you will come back by yourself.'
[BNK_2009_HowIWasStolen_nar 54] (young)

(9) ***to-bu-t**, kaji-j*
come(PFV)-COND-OBL.SG.2SG stay(PFV)-PTCP.ANT
ti-zi-naʔ mod'inaʔ sɔxran'ij-n'i-ač
reindeer-DST.PL-PL.1PL 1PL.NOM save(PFV)-SBJV-1PL.S/SG.O.PST
'If you had come, we would have saved the remaining reindeer.'
[BSP_NN4_19XX_WildReindeer_conv 19] (old)

For irrealis conditionals, the conditional converb is only rarely used. The default marking strategy for protasis clauses in this construction type is a dedicated analytic form, which features the anterior participle and the copular verb 'be' in the form of the irreal converb with the marker *-bu*[3] (10).

(10) *enče-d* ***ɛ-j*** ***ɛ-bu-r**, sɔjza*
person-2SG.S be-PTCP.ANT be-COND.IRR-NOM.SG.2SG good
enče-d ɛ-odaraxa-bi-d, ɛ-zaraxa-bi-d
person-2SG.S be-SIMIL.FUT-PRF-2SG.S be-SIMIL.PRS-PRF-2SG.S
'If you were a human, you would seem to be a good person.'
[BVN_1996_Witcher2_flk 135] (old)

3 Although formally similar to the conditional converb marker *-buʔ*, the irreal converb marker shows different morphophonological and grammatical behaviour and thus should be treated as a distinct form (Khanina & Shluinsky 2013: 35–38; Shluinsky & Wagner-Nagy 2024: 38, 64).

The conditional converb with the marker *-buʔ* / *-bune* also has a wide range of functions outside conditional constructions, see overviews in Sorokina (2010: 348) and Siegl (2013: 440–445) and a detailed corpus-based study in Ovsjannikova (2022). In particular, this form is frequently attested in independent clauses expressing suppositions, as in (11), and self-addressed questions, see Urmančieva (2014: 587–591; 2016: 126–127). It can also be used in some types of complement clauses.

(11) *ɔdiz-ʔ* *oka-an* ***baze-zo-bu-tuʔ*** *tɔni-n*
grass-PL many-ADV grow.up(PFV)-IPFV-COND-OBL.SG.3PL there-LOC
‘Many plants must be growing there.’
[PNS_1990_EnetsAndRussian1_flk 11] (old)

This study focuses on another type of Forest Enets conditional construction. Its protasis clause features the conditional converb of the verb *man-* ‘say’ used as a conditional marker, as in (12)–(13).

(12) *tɔl’kɔ* ***ma-bu-t*** *ijun’* *d’irii-xon*
only say(PFV)-COND-OBL.SG.2SG June moon-LOC.SG
n’i-ʔ *kan’i-ʔ,* *tɔmini-duʔ* *kaji-za-ʔ*
NEG-3PL.S leave(PFV)-CNG just-OBL.SG.3PL stay(PFV)-FUT-3PL.S
ɛko-n
this-LOC
‘Only if they did not leave in June, they will just stay here.’
[BSP_NN4_19XX_WildReindeer_conv 227–228] (old)

(13) ***ma-b*** *ŋɔ-n’iʔ* *buzimuʔɔ-ʔ,* *axa* *ɛʔɛ,*
say(PFV)-COND foot-PL.1SG start_moving(PFV)-3PL.S aha yes
srazu *mɔl* *šiʔ* *purzi* *bunora-riʔ*
at_once QUOT 1SG.ACC back pull(PFV)-2DU.S/SG.O
‘If my legs start moving, yeah, yes, he said, pull me back at once.’
[SNI_2010_FunnyStory_flk 87] (young)

Shluinsky & Wagner-Nagy (2024: 65) discuss this construction briefly, noting that it is used to describe real conditions, primarily with generic interpretation (12) and sometimes with future temporal reference (13). In this study, I propose a scenario for the emergence of this meaning in the course of the development of a conditional marker on the basis of the verb *man-* ‘say’ and show how it interacts with other properties of this marker.

3. Data: the corpus and the two generations of speakers

The study is based on a corpus of glossed oral texts in Forest Enets comprising circa 115 000 words. The corpus includes both legacy recordings made in the 1970s–1990s and more recent recordings made in 2005–2010.[4] The legacy recordings mainly document the speech of Forest Enets speakers born in the 1910s–1930s, and the more recent recordings document the speech of people born in the 1940s–1960s. Thus, the two parts of the corpus roughly correspond to two different generations of Forest Enets speakers and, indeed, some speakers of the younger generation are children of the speakers of the older generation. There are also sociolinguistic differences between the two groups. While the speakers of the older generation acquired Russian mostly in adulthood and often imperfectly, the speakers of the younger generation had to attend a boarding school where they were taught in Russian and use of their native language was discouraged. For a detailed history of russification and language shift in the Enets community see Khanina, Koryakov & Shluinsky (2018) and Khanina (2021).

In addition, the legacy texts and the more recent texts differ with respect to the sociolinguistic context at the time of recording. The legacy recordings capture Enets at a time when it was still regularly used within the community. In contrast, the more recent recordings document the state of the Enets language after the passing of the speakers of the older generation, at a moment when Enets was used only rarely. Since most texts by the older speakers were recorded in conditions more favourable in terms of language use, and conversely, it is impossible to tease apart the generational differences in language acquisition and early-age usage from the differences in the conditions of language use at the time of recording. Both of these factors can be expected to contribute to processes

4 The modern texts were recorded and transcribed by Andrey Shluinsky, Olesya Khanina, the author, Natalia Stoynova and Sergey Trubetskoy in 2005–2010. The legacy recordings were kindly provided by the Dudinka branch of GTRK 'Noril'sk', Tajmyr House of Folk Culture, Dar'ja S. Bolina, Oksana E. Dobžanskaja, Irina P. Sorokina, and Anna Ju. Urmančieva, transcribed by the people mentioned above and glossed by Andrey Shluinsky. In 2008–2011, the work was conducted as a part of the project "Documentation of Enets: digitization and analysis of legacy field materials and fieldwork with last speakers", supported by the Endangered Languages Documentation Programme (https://www.eldp.net).

of attrition, which are likely to be more pronounced in the texts by the younger speakers.

The composition and size of the corpus allow for a quantitative exploration of small-scale change attributable to attrition. In particular, as shown by Ovsjannikova & Xanina (2018), in the texts by younger Enets speakers non-finite forms tend to be used less frequently and their distributions tend to become more skewed towards frequent forms. The rate of these changes suggests that there is no clear division line between the generations, at least with respect to the use of non-finite forms.

Still, the distinction between the two generations outlined above provides a convenient cut-off point for the study of language change, including the ongoing processes of grammaticalization and lexicalization. For instance, a number of differences between the two generations can be established in the use of the conditional converb, in particular in complement clauses; these differences indicate an increase in the integration of the two clauses (Ovsjannikova 2022).

In general, the texts by the speakers born before 1940 make up a smaller part of the corpus (ca. 37000 words as compared to ca. 78000) and they represent fewer older speakers altogether (12, as opposed to 25 speakers from the younger generation). However, since the frequency of non-finite forms in the texts by the older speakers is higher, the number of attestations of the conditional participle is comparable across generations, with 399 and 489 examples from the texts by the older and younger speakers respectively. The construction in which the conditional converb of the verb *man-* ‘say’ is used as a conditional marker is attested in 46 examples from the texts by the older speakers and in 45 examples from the texts by the younger speakers. Thus, given the gradual nature of language change and the arbitrariness of any periodization, the current subdivision into two generations ensures quantitative comparability of the two samples.

In the next section, I discuss several grammatical properties of the conditional marker based on the verb *man-* ‘say’ that testify to its change over the course of time and help to determine its niche among the conditional constructions of Forest Enets. In particular, I will analyse the distribution of the formal variants of this marker and the presence of possessive marking (4.1), the position of this marker in the clause (4.2), the aspectual properties of the clause (4.3), and its relation to the context (4.4).

4. The use of the conditional converb of the verb *man-* 'say' by the two generations of Forest Enets speakers

4.1. Allomorph choice and possessive marking

As discussed in section 2, the Forest Enets conditional converb marker has several formal variants, *-bune*, *-buʔ* and *-b*, which are here regarded as allomorphs. The conditional converb is among the non-finite forms in Forest Enets which can be used with a possessive suffix referring to the subject of the clause, as in (14), see Khanina & Shluinsky (2013) on possessive marking of Forest Enets non-finite forms.

(14) *tezaʔ* *d'a-za* ***kɔdi-bu-ta***,
now earth-NOM.SG.3SG freeze(PFV)-COND-OBL.SG.3SG
sɔjza-an *d'azo-da-d*
good-ADV go(IPFV)-FUT-2SG.S
'If the soil freezes now, you will go easily.'
[BAS_2010_RedLake_nar 33] (young)

There are some restrictions on the possible combinations of the allomorphs with possessive markers. The allomorph *-bune* is always used with possessive marking, *-buʔ* can be used both with (14) and without possessive marking,[5] and the allomorph *-b* is only used without possessive marking. Thus, overall, there are four formal variants of the conditional converb attested in the corpus.

It can be hypothesized that in the course of its development into a conditional marker, the conditional converb of the verb *man-* 'say' could partly lose its combinatorial freedom. To test this hypothesis, I compare the distribution of the formal variants among the forms of the verb *man-* 'say' used as a conditional marker, on the one hand, and among the rest of the conditional converb forms, on the other hand, for the two generations of speakers, as shown in Table 1. In Table 1, "CM" stands for "conditional marker" and the numbers in brackets show the ratio of each of the variants to the total number of occurrences of the conditional converb, shown in the rightmost column.

5 When this allomorph is combined with possessive markers, the glottal stop is not phonetically realized but its presence is reflected in the choice of the allomorph of the possessive marker.

Table 1. The distribution of formal variants of the conditional converb.

Year of birth	Function	*-bune-* POSS	*-buʔ-* POSS	*-buʔ*	*-b*	Total
before 1940	‘say’ CM	0	**43 (0.94)**	1 (0.02)	2 (0.04)	46
	Other	29 (0.09)	269 (0.78)	17 (0.05)	28 (0.08)	343
after 1940	‘say’ CM	0	20 (0.4)	0	**33 (0.6)**	53
	Other	134 (0.3)	285 (0.65)	6 (0.01)	19 (0.04)	444
Total		163	614	24	77	878

The data in Table 1 suggest a number of generalizations. Most importantly, the two generations differ with respect to the preferred form of the conditional marker based on the verb *man-* ‘say’. The speakers born before 1940 typically use the allomorph *-buʔ* with possessive marking (15), whereas in the texts by the speakers born after 1940 the variant *-b* becomes much more frequent (16) (the difference between the distributions of these two variants is statistically significant, Fisher exact test, $p < 0.001$).

(15) ***ma-bu-t*** *tɔ-juʔ* *tɔɔ-j-zʔ,* *axa,*
say(PFV)-COND-OBL.SG.2SG that-SEL reach(PFV)-MD-3SG.MD aha
teza? *d’eri* *d’oda-j*
now day middle-ADJ
‘If it [the sun] has got there, then yeah, now it is the middle of the day.’
[BED_BNN_1991_MyLife_nar 289] (old)

(16) *sej-za* ***ma-b*** *n’i-ʔ* *buzider-ʔ,*
eye-NOM.PL.3SG say(PFV)-COND NEG-3PL.S move(IPFV)-CNG
kaa
die(PFV).3SG.S
‘If its [the reindeer’s] eyes don’t move, it has died.’
[BLD_2010_Tendons_nar 14–15] (young)

Second, the verb *man-* ‘say’ used as a conditional marker is never attested with the allomorph *-bune*. In the texts by the older speakers this allomorph is infrequent in general. However, even for the older generation, the distribution of the allomorphs for *man-* ‘say’ used as a conditional marker is different from the distribution of the remaining

occurrences of the conditional converb (Fisher exact test, $p \approx 0.04$; the allomorph *-bune* was opposed to all the other allomorphs). This discrepancy becomes much more pronounced in the texts by the younger speakers. In these texts *-bune* is much more frequently used as a conditional converb marker, but still it is never attested with the conditional marker based on the verb 'say' (Fisher exact test, $p < 0.0001$; the allomorph *-bune* was opposed to all the other allomorphs).

Note that the absence of attestations of the conditional marker with the allomorph *-bune* cannot be attributed to the general incompatibility of the verb *man-* 'say' with *-bune*, as such forms are attested in the lexical uses of this converb, i.e. when denoting a speech act in the protasis (17) (there were two occurrences of this kind and they were naturally classified as "other" in Table 1).

(17) *d'isi-jʔ* ***ma-bune-da***
grandfather-NOM.SG.1SG say(PFV)-COND-OBL.SG.3SG
kan'-ʔ, *mod'* *kano-ta-zʔ*
leave(PFV)-2SG.S.IMP 1SG.NOM leave(PFV)-FUT-1SG.S
'If my grandfather says "Go", I will go.'
[BNK_2009_HowIWasStolen_nar 59] (young)

Likewise, the allomorph *-bune* is not semantically incompatible with habitual or generic conditions, since it is attested in such constructions otherwise, as shown by example (7) in section 2 above.

The allomorph *-buʔ* with possessive marking, which is typical for the verb 'say' used as a conditional marker, is also the most frequent formal variant for the conditional converb in general, and it is especially frequent in the texts by the older speakers. It may be hypothesized that in the texts by the older speakers the form of the conditional converb of the verb *man-* 'say' is already largely lexicalized in the form which would have been the most frequent by that point.

The lexicalized status of this form is also suggested by the fact that the conditional marker based on the verb *man-* 'say' manifests a specific distribution in terms of the person and number of the possessive marker. It is attested only with the 2nd person singular possessive marker, as in (18).

(18) *buʔ* *ejto-r-e-zʔ* ***ma-bu-t***
3SG.NOM ask.for(PFV)-PASS-MD-3SG.MD say(PFV)-COND-OBL.SG.2SG
enče-giz, *n’i* *d’uziri-d*
person-LAT.PL NEG.3SG.S listen(IPFV)-FUT.CNG
pe-xon *ad’i*
outside-LOC.SG sit(IPFV).3SG.S
‘When she is sought by people, she will not listen, she is sitting outdoors.’ [BVN_1996_Matchmaking1_nar 154–156] (old)

A possible explanation for the choice of 2nd person singular possessive marker is that the conditional converb of the verb *man-* ‘say’ in conditional clauses was initially employed to introduce a potential suggestion on the part of an (imaginary) interlocutor. The semantics of this form could be rephrased as ‘supposing you say’, followed by a hypothetical event corresponding to the protasis (see section 5 for typological parallels). Even if this hypothesis is accurate, there is no obvious way to ascertain whether the reference to the interlocutor still constituted part of the semantics of this construction in the texts by the older speakers. It can only be observed that the form with possessive marking is frequently found in contexts lacking any evident dialogical interaction, as shown by (15) and (19)–(21) below. It is also likely that this motivation was at least partially lost for the younger speakers, as they predominantly use the form *mab*. The rise in the frequency of this form in the texts by the younger speakers can generally be interpreted as a sign of the semantic bleaching and formal reduction of this marker, changes typically associated with grammaticalization.

As the two most frequent formal variants of the conditional converb of the verb *man-* ‘say’ used as a conditional marker are *mabut* and *mab*, for the sake of brevity this marker will be further referred to as *mab*(*ut*).

4.2. Position in the clause

The marker *mab*(*ut*) can occupy different positions in the conditional clause. First, it can be located at the periphery of the clause, most frequently clause-initially (19) but sometimes in clause-final position (20). Second, it may be found inside the clause, typically after the first constituent (21).

(19) ***ma-bu-t*** *pe-xon* *kabu*
say(PFV)-COND-OBL.SG.2SG outside-LOC.SG polar.lights.NOM.SG
lɔjde-ŋa *pɐušum-a-nojuʔ,*
set.fire(PFV)-MULT.3SG.S fall.night(PFV)-NMLZ.SIM-ADV
čike-r *kazu* *pɔn'iŋa*
this-NOM.SG.2SG blizzard.NOM.SG do(IPFV).3SG.S
'If northern lights blaze up in the evening, this means that there will be a snowstorm.' [BVN_1994_FolkSigns1_nar 252] (old)

(20) *ɛtɔ,* *pɔn'iŋa-ʔ* *sɔjza* *mal'ča,* *kasa* *enčeu-ʔ*
well do(IPFV)-3PL.S good fur_coat man person-PL
ma-bu-t
say(PFV)-COND-OBL.SG.2SG
'Well, they wear a good overcoat if they are men.'
[BAP_BNN_1997_Interview2_conv 175] (young)

(21) *bi-ta* ***ma-b*** *d'ɔri,* *mu,* *oka*
water-NOM.SG.3SG say(PFV)-COND deep PLC many
poga *mɔžnɔ* *či-š*
fishing_net it_is_possible set(PFV)-INF
'If the water is deep one can install many nets.'
[BLD_2008_UnderIceNets_nar 20] (young)

There is a difference in the positioning of the marker in the texts by the speakers of the two generations, as shown in Table 2. The column "Clause periphery" combines the numbers for the clause-initial and clause-final positions, as the latter are very infrequent and cannot be statistically assessed as a separate category.

Table 2. Position of *mab*(*ut*) in the conditional clause.

Year of birth	Clause periphery	Inside the clause	Total
before 1940	31 (0.7)	15 (0.3)	46
after 1940	28 (0.5)	25 (0.5)	53

Although this difference is not statistically significant, it can be observed that in the texts by speakers born after 1940, the marker *mab*(*ut*) is used inside the clause more frequently than in the texts by the older speakers.

This observation is echoed by the differences in the form of the marker. As discussed in section 4.1, speakers of the older generation predominantly use the form *mabut*, with the 2nd person singular possessive marker, whereas speakers of the younger generation more commonly use the form *mab*. The data further suggest that in the texts by the younger speakers, there is an association between the form of the marker and its position: the more reduced form *mab* is more frequently used inside the clause than the form *mabut* (the difference is statistically significant, one-tailed Fisher test, $p < 0.05$). This is shown in Table 3, which is based on the data from the texts by younger speakers only.

Table 3. Form and position of *mab*(*ut*) in the conditional clause in the texts by speakers born before 1940.

Form	Clause periphery	Inside the clause	Total
mabut	14 (0.7)	6 (0.3)	20
mab	14 (0.4)	19 (0.6)	33

These differences may be connected to the development of this marker in the following way. Originally, the conditional converb of the verb *man-* ‘say’ is likely to have constituted a separate clause containing the conditional converb of the verb *man-* ‘say’ introducing direct speech. As such, it can be expected to be juxtaposed to the direct speech clause rather than inserted within it. At the same time, its more frequent use in the position after the first constituent, especially in the more reduced form, might be connected to its development into a clause-connecting particle.[6] Forest Enets predominantly uses non-finite strategies in clause-combining, and the meanings ‘even’ and ‘only’, cross-linguistically often expressed by focus particles, are expressed by suffixes in Forest Enets. Still, there are several particles used for establishing interclausal

6 One reviewer suggested that the marker *mab*(*ut*) can be called a conjunction. However, all conjunctions attested in Forest Enets are borrowings from Russian and they are consistently placed clause-initially. Even though it is theoretically possible for a language to develop native conjunctions under the influence of those borrowed from another language, the data in this section shows that in terms of its position in the clause *mab*(*ut*) has become more similar to discourse particles of Enets origin than to borrowed conjunctions. For this reason, in this paper I opted for the more non-committal label “conditional marker”.

relations and these are frequently placed after the first constituent, cf. the particles *an'i* 'again' and *bɔz* 'only' in (22)–(23).

(22) *kɔtiŋa-jč* ***an'i*** *taxa* *nuk,*
float(IPFV)-1DU.S/SG.O.PST again behind towards
taxa *nuku-j* *to-xon*
behind towards-ADJ lake-LOC.SG
'We floated not far away, on a nearby lake.'
[BLD_2008_ISawCapercaillie_nar 2] (young)

(23) *nɛnago* ***bɔz*** *či-d-e-zʔ,* *čike*
mosquito.NOM.SG only fly(PFV)-FUT-MD-3PL.MD this
ti-z *tɛxɛ* *kere-tuʔ* *to-goɔ-ʔ*
reindeer-NOM.PL.2SG that self-OBL.SG.3PL come(PFV)-DUR-3PL.S
'As soon as the mosquitos fly, the reindeer come by themselves.'
[SNI_2008_TaleAndRealLife_nar 13] (young)

Thus, in the texts by the younger speakers the marker *mab*(*ut*) behaves more similarly to these particles in terms of the position in the clause than in the texts by the older speakers, and is likely developing away from its source, the conditional converb of the verb *man-* 'say', as indicated by the association between the reduced form *mab* and clause-internal position.

4.3. Verbal aspect

As mentioned in section 2, in semantic terms the conditional constructions with the marker *mab*(*ut*) predominantly describe relations between generic or habitual situations, as in (24)–(25).

(24) *prɔdukti-z* ***ma-b*** *tara-ʔ,*
foodstuff-NOM.PL.2SG say(PFV)-COND necessary(IPFV)-3PL.S
mu-d, *kano-ta-d* *tɛxɛ,* *pensii-d*
PLC-LAT.SG leave(PFV)-FUT-2SG.S that pension-OBL.SG.2SG
nɔʔɔ-da-d
grasp(PFV)-FUT-2SG.S
'If you need food, you go there and get your pension.'
[SNI_2010_BuryingDeceasedPeopleFormerly_nar 175] (young)

(25) *kezer* ***ma-bu-t*** *enčeu-ʔ*
wild_reindeer.OBL.SG say(PFV)-COND-OBL.SG.2SG person-PL
kaza-ʔ, *kezer* *buja*
kill(PFV)-3PL.S wild_reindeer.OBL.SG blood.NOM.SG
n’e-d *tadu-t*
NEG-2SG.S trample(PFV)-FUT.CNG
‘If people have killed a wild reindeer, one is not to tread in the wild reindeer’s blood.’ [BVN_1996_FolkSigns2_nar 114–115] (old)

The verb form most commonly used in protasis clauses with this marker is the aorist form, as in (24)–(25). The aorist in Enets is the basic tense form used for present time reference with imperfective verbs (24) and for past time reference with perfective verbs (25).[7] Both in Enets and cross-linguistically, generic and present habitual events are typically described by forms with present time reference. However, in protasis clauses with the marker *mab*(*ut*), perfective verbs are attested more frequently than imperfectives, as shown in Table 4 below.[8] This pattern is also observed in habitual conditional constructions with the conditional converb (26), although here it is less pronounced.

(26) *mɛz* ***mɔkata-bune-d*** *mɛse-xon,*
tent.OBL.SG place(PFV)-COND-OBL.SG.2SG wind-LOC.SG
brezenta-d *d’ii* *mɔj*
tarpaulin-OBL.SG.2SG tent_cover.NOM.SG branch.OBL.SG
d’ez *tauzo-da*
to wear_out(PFV)-FUT.3SG.S
‘If you install a tent in windy weather, the tarpaulin cover will tear on the branches.’ [BLD_2009_MakingPoles_nar 13–14] (young)

For comparison, in clauses with the conditional converb in general, excluding the clauses with *mab*(*ut*), the imperfectives are somewhat more frequent. This is shown in Table 4, which contains the distribution

7 In Enets each verb is lexically either perfective or imperfective, cf. so-called Slavic-style aspect. The aspect of the verb determines the temporal interpretation of some of the TAM forms, in particular the aorist form, see Šluinskij (2017) on the Enets aspectual system.

8 Clauses with *mab*(*ut*) and non-verbal predicates typically lack any verb. However, they were counted as clauses with imperfective verbs, because in regular clauses with the conditional converb the imperfective existential verb ‘be’ would have been used.

of verbal aspect in three types of clauses: with the marker *mab*(*ut*),[9] with the conditional converb and habitual interpretation, and with the conditional converb in general.

Table 4. Verbal aspect in clauses with *mab*(*ut*), habitual clauses with the conditional converb and all clauses with the conditional converb.

	IPFV	PFV	Total
Conditional clauses with *mab*(*ut*)	39 (0.41)	56 (0.59)	95
Habitual conditional clauses with the conditional converb	119 (0.47)	136 (0.53)	255
All clauses with the conditional converb	459 (0.53)	410 (0.47)	869

The association between the perfective aspect and habitual/generic conditionals may be motivated as follows. The use of a perfective verb in this context underscores the fact that a habitual event consists of numerous individual occurrences. Within a given clause with habitual interpretation, the perfective verb portrays a specific instance, which exemplifies one of a regular sequence of events. In section 5, I will show how this way of representing events fits into the general picture of the development of the conditional marker based on the verb *man*- 'say'.

4.4. Clause integration and the status of *mab*(*ut*)

In the majority of contexts, the clause with the marker *mab*(*ut*) is more or less directly followed by a clause that can be analysed as an apodosis, as in (24)–(25). In some cases, however, there is no clear conditional relation and/or syntactic adjacency between the clauses. For instance, in (27)–(28) the clauses with *mab*(*ut*) cannot be regarded as a proper condition, since they do not imply any possibility of an alternative flow of events. The first clause in (27) describes a natural event that serves as a temporal circumstance rather than a condition for the events expressed in the following clauses. In (28), the clause with *mab*(*ut*) specifies the setting for the events described in the surrounding context and does not imply that a certain snow level is a condition determining the way iron traps should be installed.

9 The number of clauses with *mab*(*ut*) given in Table 4 is slightly lower than that given in the tables above, as some clauses were incomplete and did not contain a verb.

(27) *d’ebi-se-za* *d’od’i-gon* *sɔʔ*
leaf-CAR-PTCP.SIM time-LOC.SG just_now
kaʔu-t-e-zʔ ***ma-bu-t***
go_down(PFV)-FUT-MD-3SG.MD say(PFV)-COND-OBL.SG.2SG
čike, <…> *čike-r,* *čike-r* *tɔz*
this this-NOM.SG.2SG this-NOM.SG.2SG so
piri-da-r *an’i* *ŋul’i* *ŋul’i* *sɔjza* *čaj*
cook(PFV)-FUT-2SG.SG.O and very very good tea
‘When this [a birch leaf] falls down in September, you just boil it, and it is a very good tea.’
[BVN_1995_MushroomsAndBerries_nar 113–117] (old)

(28) *bɛse* *d’ɔgo-d* *ɛuʔ,* *ɛuʔ* *mɔkata-da-r,*
iron trap-OBL.SG.2SG here here install(PFV)-FUT-2SG.SG.O
sira-za ***ma-b*** *ɛuʔ* *d’od’i-d*
snow-NOM.SG.3SG say(PFV)-COND here time-LAT.SG
ŋa-j, *ɛuʔ* *d’od’i-d* *ŋa,* *ɛd* *sira*
be-IMP.3SG.S here time-LAT.SG be.3SG.S so snow
n’i-ʔ *ɛd* *pu-da-r* *tɔri*
on-LAT so put(PFV)-FUT-2SG.SG.O so
‘You will put your iron trap here, here. Let the snow, say, be up to here, it is up to here, you will put it on the snow like so.’
[BLD_2005_SableTrap_nar 5–7] (young)

As mentioned above, the lexical verb in the protasis clauses with the conditional marker *mab*(*ut*) is predominantly used in the aorist form. However, there are also occasional examples where a non-finite form of the lexical verb is used, in particular a conditional converb (29) or a simultaneous converb (30).

(29) *vɔt* ***ma-bu-t*** *klasu-d*
so say(PFV)-COND-OBL.SG.2SG class-LAT.SG
to-bune-duʔ, *nɔnedu?* *ɔnɛj* *baza-an*
come(PFV)-COND-OBL.SG.3PL 3PL.LOC true word-PROL.SG
d’ori-d’a-d?
speak(IPFV)-INTER-2SG.S
‘If, say, you came to the classroom, did you speak Enets to them?’
[ChNP_BNN_1997_Interview_conv 96] (young)

(30) *vɔt* ***ma-bu-t*** *enčeu-naʔ* *kɔju*
so say(PFV)-COND-OBL.SG.2SG person-PL.1PL tundra.OBL.SG
n'i-n ***d'iri-buʔuj-zuʔ,*** *kere-tuʔ*
on-LOC live(IPFV)-CVB.SIM-NOM.SG.3PL self-OBL.SG.3P
i-si-mʔ *tɛni-ʔ*
NEG-INTER-3PL.S.CONT know-CNG
'So, say, when our people lived in the tundra, they knew their ways, after all.' [BMN_BNN_199X_FolkSigns_conv 3] (old)

In these instances, *mabut* can be considered a marker indicating the hypothetical status of the clause rather than a proper conditional marker used for the protasis, and the primary clause-combining device is likely to be the non-finite form. While one might expect a higher frequency of such uses in the texts by the older speakers, they happen to be very rare in both parts of the corpus, making any quantitative assessment impossible.

There are also examples which, conversely, can be interpreted as evidence for the status of the marker *mab*(*ut*) as a conditional marker. These are examples where the conditional clause featuring *mab*(*ut*) is asyndetically conjoined with a clause containing the conditional converb proper, as in (31). Although these examples are sporadic, they indicate a functional similarity between the marker *mab*(*ut*) and the conditional converb.

(31) *a* *mod'i* *mu,* *kamozo-xin* *d'azu-m-obi-zʔ*
but 1SG.NOM PLC house-LOC.PL go(IPFV)-MULT-HAB-1SG.S
ŋɔ-n'iʔ *sɔjza* ***ma-b,*** *ŋɔ-n'iʔ*
leg-PL.1SG good.3SG.S say(PFV)-COND leg-PL.1SG
i-buʔ *d'e-ʔ*
NEG-COND ache(IPFV)-CNG
'And I, well, I go on visits, if my legs are good, if my legs don't ache.' [PAS_BNN_1994_Interview2_conv 166–167] (old)

The examples discussed in this section primarily show the ways in which constructions with the conditional marker based on the verb *man-* 'say' can deviate from the canonical bipartite structure of a conditional construction with a protasis and an apodosis clause. Unfortunately, these examples are too scarce to make any quantitative generalizations about the differences between the generations. Still, they can be viewed as

traces of the development of the conditional marker on the basis of the conditional converb of the verb *man-* ‘say’. In particular, at one of the stages of this development *mab*(*ut*) was likely used as a particle marking supposition. This is suggested by the examples where the clause with *mab*(*ut*) is used without an apodosis clause or where *mab*(*ut*) is used in a clause with a non-finite form.

In the next section, I propose a possible scenario of the development of the conditional marker on the basis of the verb *man-* ‘say’, which takes into account its properties and the differences in its use by the two generations of speakers.

5. Proposed path of development

Judging by the literature, the use of the conditional converb of the verb ‘say’ as a conditional marker observed in Forest Enets is absent from the languages which are close to it areally and/or genealogically. In particular, it is not attested in Tundra Enets, the closest relative of Forest Enets, and in the Nenets languages, although in both the conditional converb performs a set of functions very similar to those of the Forest Enets conditional converb, see Burkova (2004) on Forest and Tundra Nenets. In their study of the grammatical and discourse uses of the verb ‘say’ in the languages of Siberia, Matić and Pakendorf (2013: 390) also report that the use of this verb as a conditional marker is found only in Forest Enets.

The path of change proposed for the marker *mab*(*ut*) in Forest Enets draws on typological evidence of two kinds. First, one of the widespread types of development of the verb ‘say’ is to be recruited as a discourse marker of suggestion or supposition, as discussed by Van Olmen (2013) and Chapell (2017). Second, words expressing possibility and supposition serve as one of the sources for conditional markers (Traugott 1985: 290–291). These two kinds of evidence explain the choice of the verb ‘say’ as a lexical source for a conditional marker: first this verb starts to be used as a marker of suggestion, then this marker develops into a conditional marker. What makes the case of Forest Enets unusual is that the expression of possibility and supposition is also one of the main functions of the conditional converb when used in independent

clauses (32), as discussed by Urmančieva (2014: 587–591, 2016: 126–127) and Ovsjannikova (2022).[10]

(32) *tɔʔ* *kun'i,* *kun'i-juʔ* *tɔʔ* *kaši-čiʔ* *baza-ʔ*
well how how-SEL well man-OBL.PL.3DU word-PL
kameko-bu-čiʔ
understand(IPFV)-COND-OBL.SG.3DU
'Well, how, somehow they must have understood one another's words.'
[PNS_1990_MoreoAndWitch1_flk 57] (old)

Thus, in Enets, the meaning of supposition can be attributed both to the lexical source, i.e. the verb *man-* 'say', and to its grammatical form, i.e. the conditional converb. As discussed in 4.1, when used as a conditional marker, the verb *man-* is sometimes attested with 2nd person singular possessive suffixes. Combining the lexical meaning of the verb, the person of the subject, and the suppositional meaning of the conditional marker, the original meaning of the form may be reconstructed as 'you might say' or 'supposing you say'.

A possible analogy is the pragmatic use of the imperative of the of the English verb *say*, discussed by Van Olmen (2013). This form functions "as an introducer of a potential example" (Van Olmen 2013: 266) and as a conjunction-like marker introducing supposition in the form of a conditional clause. As discussed in section 4.3, the Forest Enets marker *mab*(*ut*) is predominantly used in clauses with generic/habitual interpretation, more often than not with a perfective verb. The association with the perfective aspect can also be linked to the function of introducing a potential example, one in a series of identical events. The generic and habitual events typically described by constructions with *mab*(*ut*) are more compatible with the semantics of supposition and may more easily serve as a potential example than singular and episodic events. The latter are bound to a particular point in time, whereas the former generalize over recurring sequences of events. At the same time, it is a particular instance of such a sequence of events that is used as an example, hence the frequent use of perfective verbs in clauses with the marker *mab*(*ut*).

10 It should be noted that this function is also characteristic of the conditional converb at least in Tundra Enets, as well as Forest and Tundra Nenets (Burkova 2004).

Another similarity between the English marker *say* and the Forest Enets marker is that both originally referred to the (imaginary) addressee as to the source of the supposition. As shown in section 4.1, in the texts by the older speakers the conditional marker based on the verb *man-* ‘say’ is typically used with a possessive suffix, consistently in the 2nd person singular form.

As discussed in section 4.4, the fact that prior to the use in conditional clauses the marker *mab*(*ut*) might have been more widely employed as a particle in scene-setting clauses is corroborated by the existence of constructions with only a low degree of integration and the use of *mab*(*ut*) in clauses with non-finite forms.

There is no evidence of an increase in the degree of clause integration over time in the constructions with *mab*(*ut*). Still, the differences in its formal properties observed between the two generations of speakers point to its further grammaticalization as a conditional marker. This formal change includes the gradual loss of possessive marking and the spread of the phonologically reduced form (*mab*) as well as the integration into the clause as indicated by its more frequent use inside the clause.

Thus, despite the fact that the major function of the Forest Enets conditional converb is to head the protasis clause in conditional constructions, I argue that the use of the conditional converb of the verb *man-* ‘say’ as a conditional marker is more likely to originate from the use of the conditional converb in independent clauses expressing possibility and supposition.

6. Summary

This paper deals with the use of the conditional converb of the Forest Enets verb *man-* ‘say’ as a marker of the protasis in conditional constructions. The goal of the study was to analyse the grammatical properties of this marker in order to reconstruct its development and to trace the change in its use by comparing texts by speakers of Forest Enets belonging to two different generations.

The corpus data show that already in the texts by the older speakers this marker is restricted as regards the allomorphs of the conditional converb. In the texts by the younger generation, the shorter variant *mab*

becomes predominant, whereas the variant with the possessive affix of 2nd person singular possessor becomes less frequent. Intergenerational differences are also observed in the placement of the marker within the protasis clause, with the younger speakers more frequently placing it between the clause constituents rather than at the periphery of the clause. This change may signal the loss of the marker's connection to the original converbial form and its development into a discourse marker.

Semantically, the conditional constructions with the marker *mab*(*ut*) typically describe relations between generic or habitual events. At the same time, in these constructions, the conditioning event is frequently denoted by a perfective verb in the aorist form, which usually describes singular completed events.

These facts suggest that this marker is likely to have developed on the basis of the clause expressing supposition with the addressee as the subject ('you might say'). This clause introduced another event as an example of what the addressee might suggest, which served as the basis for the protasis clause. Further the marker based on the verb *man-* 'say' developed into a clause-connecting particle, gradually losing the reference to the addressee and becoming more integrated into the protasis clause.

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Abbreviations

ACC – accusative case, ADJ – adjectivizer, ADV – adverbializer, ANT – anterior, CAR – caritive, CNG – connegative, COND – conditional, CONT – contrastive agreement marker, CVB – converb, DIM – diminutive, DST – destinative, DU – dual, DUR – durative, EXCL – exclamative particle, FUT – future, HAB – habitual, IMP – imperative, INF – infinitive, INTER – interrogative, IPFV – imperfective, IRR – irreal, LAT – lative case, LOC – locative case, MD – middle, MULT – frequentative, NEG – negative

verb, NMLZ – nominalization, NOM – nominative case, OBL – oblique case, PASS – passive, PFV – perfective, PL – plural, PLC – placeholder, PRF – perfect, PROL – prolative case, PRS – present, PST – past, PTCP – participle, QUOT – quotative particle, S – subject agreement marker, SEL – selective, SBJV – subjunctive, SG – singular, SIM – simultaneous, SIMIL – similative, SG.O – subject-object agreement marker for singular object, 1 – 1st person, 2 – 2nd person, 3 – 3rd person

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Kokkuvõte. Maria Ovsjannikova: Konditsionaalne konverbivorm tegusõnast 'ütlema' kui tingimuslik marker metsaeenetsi keeles. Metsaeenetsi keeles on tingimuslikes konstruktsioonides esineva tingimuslause peasõnaks harilikult konditsionaalne konverb. Tegusõna *man-* 'ütlema' konditsionaalne konverb võib konditsionaalse markerina esineda ka kujudel *mab* või *mabut*, mida kasutatakse tüüpiliselt koos leksikaalse öeldisverbi finiitse vormiga. Siinne korpuspõhine uuring keskendub markeri *mab*(*ut*) omadustele. Analüüsin selle markeri kasutuserinevusi kahe põlvkonna metsaeenetsi keele rääkijate

vahel ja pakun välja selle markeri võimaliku arengutee. Uurin markeri distributsiooni selle järgi, mis on tema fonoloogiline vorm, possessiivne markeering, ning positsioon osalauses, ka uurin nende konstruktsioonide aspektilisi omadusi. Mainitud markeri arvatav allikas on konstruktsioon tähendusega ‘võib öelda’, mis on algselt sisse juhatanud järgnevas osalauses esinevat olukorda kui potentsiaalset näidet, ja mis on hiljem arenenud osalauseid ühendavaks partikliks.

Märksõnad: tingimuslikud konstruktsioonid, konditsionaalne konverb, kõneverbid, grammatiseerumine, metsaeenetsi keel, diskursusemarker