

following description of endangered languages will consider them in groups, arranged in order of their position on the scale.

Many factors greatly affect the viability of a language. To take them all into account is essential in explicating the tendencies in a language's development and determining its status. When determining the extent of the endangered languages, we have limited our inquiry to only those factors that are, in our opinion, the most significant. These factors are as follows.

(a) *Size of the ethnic group and number of speakers of the language in that group.* Naturally, the fewer people there are who speak a given language, the greater the threat to that language's existence, and vice versa. However, absolute quantities will still not tell everything, since a paucity of speakers may be compensated for by other factors that are more favourable for the language. For example, the Hinukh and Negidal languages only have about 200 speakers each, but the situation with Hinukh is considerably more favourable than Negidal's (see below).

When determining the numbers, sources do not always distinguish between the population of the ethnic group and the number of speakers of its traditional language, although the latter figure may be considerably less than the former. For example, ethnic Itelmen are about one and a half thousand in number, but only about a hundred speak Itelmen. Here, the ethnic group is tending towards a loss of language. Furthermore, for many languages and ethnic groups reliable statistics are missing, and one must be guided by the approximations of specialists. Therefore one should bear in mind that in many cases no specific sociolinguistic surveys on language proficiency have been made, and that this makes it hard to produce objective statistical data. The degree of proficiency in the language may vary widely, from a passive knowledge of a limited vocabulary and basic grammatical constructions to full mastery of the language as the single means of communication in all traditional communicative spheres.

(b) *Speakers of the language, grouped by age.* Extremely important is a categorisation of speakers by age group: the older generation (50 years and older), the middle generation (30–50 years), young adults (20–30 years), adolescents (10–20 years), and children (up to 10 years). This is an indispensable diagnostic tool for forecasting the viability of the language. If there are speakers from every age group, then the language will not die out for

another 40–50 years, but if the children and adolescents do not speak the language of their parents, then it is unrealistic to expect the language to survive into the near future without the intervention of extraordinary circumstances.

(c) *The ethnic character of marriages.* The most favourable circumstances for the preservation of a language are marriages between members of the same language community; with mixed marriages, there is the possibility of changeover to the more socially prestigious language, often Russian. However, mixed marriages do not always lead to the loss of the ethnic language. For example, Hinukh men do not marry Hinukh women; they take their wives from neighbouring Tsez (Dido) villages. Likewise, Hinukh women leave their community marrying men from other ethnic groups. Nevertheless, the social status of the Hinukh language in a Hinukh family is so high that it remains the language of the family.

(d) *Upbringing of preschool-aged children.* It is important where and by whom the children are raised: in the family or outside the family. Growing up within a family makes learning the ethnic language easier, especially if the children live together with the older generation of relatives (grandparents). But if the children live in a family where the ethnic language is not spoken (this is especially common in families of mixed marriages) then this factor does not have a positive effect. One should note that from the 1950s through the 1980s it was the state practice to raise children of small ethnic groups outside the family, in boarding schools. This practice was carried out in many regions of the North and Far East and brought about an artificial interruption of the transfer of the ethnic language, doing great harm to the Aleut, Itelmen, Negidal and Yukaghir languages, along with several others.

(e) *Location of the ethnic group.* Living in the native homeland is important for preserving the language of an ethnic group. This factor, in combination with several others, has preserved many Daghestan languages (including some with very few speakers), the languages of Pamir (such as Yazgulami, Ishkashimi, Bartangi, Wakhi, Khufi, etc.), and also Bats (Georgia). Conversely, resettlement, especially when forced, is one of the most negative factors. For certain languages this has had devastating consequences (Nivkh, Naukan, Eskimo, Nganasan).

Also important is the density of the population of the ethnic group. A group with a dense population will have a better chance

of preserving its language than a group of the same size, spread out over different territories and without regular language contact. This factor is unfavourable for Naukan Eskimos, the Nivkh, Orok, Udihe, Oroch, and Southern Selkup peoples.

(f) *Language contacts of the ethnic group.* The more contact there is with other cultures, especially in another language, the worse it is for the viability of a given ethnic language. Living in one area with speakers of a more prestigious language is especially unfavourable; such a situation exists with the Yugh, Aleut, Asiatic Eskimos, Yukaghir, Oroch, Alutor, the Selkup and Nganasan languages. As is evident, this particular factor (the result of Russian settlement in ethnic homelands) is crucial in determining the fate of the languages of the peoples of the North.

One special case is Bats, spoken by approximately half the inhabitants of Zemo-Alvani in the Georgian Soviet Republic. In spite of a long-standing coinhabitation with their Georgian neighbours, the viability of Bats, according to the information that is available, will be preserved.

(g) *Way of Life.* Ethnic groups preserving to a significant degree their traditional way of life (family structure, division of labour, dwellings and so forth) have a better chance of preserving their language. Adaptation to modern ways of life makes preserving the language more difficult. Along with other factors, systematic state policy to eliminate traditional ways of life has undermined the positions of many languages spoken by the peoples of the North. But in other areas (the Caucasus, Pamir) preservation of the ways of life has helped preserve the languages.

(h) *National self-consciousness.* The presence of a national self-consciousness may block the unfavourable consequences of many negative factors. For example, in recent years we have witnessed a sharp rise in the Asiatic Eskimo language in connection with the establishment of direct contacts with Alaska. Unexpectedly, Eskimo has become a language for international communication. This situation could become a deciding factor in the rebirth of the Eskimo language.

Conversely, the lack of a national identity does not stimulate the normal development of a language. Such is the situation with the Svan language. In spite of its significant number of speakers (more than thirty thousand), knowledge of Svan is not prestigious; many Svan call Georgian their native language, and proficiency

in Svan among adolescents and young adults is not at a high level.

(i) *Instruction in the language at school.* One of the most helpful deliberate influences on the preservation of a language is the teaching of the language at school. In recent years there has been an active process of introducing the ethnic language into elementary school programmes as a subject. Languages taught in elementary school include Yukaghir (through to fourth grade in the Andriushkino settlement and as an optional subject through to eighth grade in Nelemnoe), Nivkh (through to second grade in the settlements Nogliki and Nekrasovka), Ulch (in first grade), Selkup northern dialect (through to fourth grade), Chaplino Eskimo (through to fourth grade), Aleut (until fourth grade), and Ket (partially in five schools). School instruction is being organised for Enets, Itelmen and Nganasan, but in these cases it is more a question of teaching a foreign – not a native – language.

(j) *State language policy.* On the whole, it is possible to divide the history of post-revolutionary language policy into the following periods: (1) 1920s–1940s: a period of recognition of the unique identity of each ethnicity, and creation of writing systems for the majority of languages, based on roman characters in the 1920s, and on Cyrillic in the 1930s. The very fact of the changeover to Cyrillic signified a subordination of all languages to the primacy of Russian, and an orientation towards a general Russification of the population of the Soviet Union. For many peoples few in number, the writing system was produced as a formality and was never put into practical use. (2) 1950s–1970s: in this period the idea of a unified Soviet culture came to the fore, and lesser languages were treated with disregard – and now and then a policy aimed at their elimination was instituted. (3) The end of the 1980s is associated with the emergence of national movements, the struggle for self-determination and a rise in prestige of national languages. Against this background social movements have arisen for the preservation of ethnic groups and languages of small size. In 1990 the Association of Peoples of the North was created, calling for the struggle for the preservation and growth of the aboriginal nationalities of the North, Siberia and the Far East, and a rise in national self-consciousness. For some ethnicities, however, it is already too late, but in many cases the tendency towards decline and extinction may be reversed.

This general course of language policy cut across the fates of the individual languages in various ways in the first period.

Certain small languages found themselves involved in the process of alphabetisation: Eskimo, Itelmen, Aleut, Nivkh, Selkup, and Udihe. A number of languages were never acknowledged: thus, the Orok and Ulch languages were lumped with Nanai, Enets and Nganasan with Nenets, and Oroch with Udihe. Their alphabetisation was done simply without adequate preparation.

As for Yugh, Kerek, Negidal, and Yukaghir, the existence of these languages was not even noted.

Descriptions of the Endangered Languages

What follows is basic information about languages whose future existence is in the greatest danger. This information comes from specialists who graciously responded to the present author's survey (the appropriate names are given before the description of each language). It was not possible to obtain the required information from printed sources; such information has not been collected or compiled. Even during the census-taking of many small ethnic groups their languages were not noted. (For technical reasons, this survey does not include information on the endangered Finno-Ugric languages: Vod, Liv and Izhor. Evidently, Vod should be put with Group I, and Liv and Izhor with Group II.)

Group I.

The languages in this group are already on the very brink of extinction.

1. *Yugh* (G. K. Verner, Taganrog) At the present time, there are about ten to fifteen Yugh (in the Turukhan region of the Krasnoyarsk Krai region at the Vorogovo settlement), of whom only two or three can speak the language, and very poorly at that. Previously the Yugh lived along the Yenisei river from Yeniseisk to the mouth of the Dupches; according to some reports, one part of the Yugh people (the Kets from Sym) migrated to the Yenisei from the upper reaches of the Ket river, a tributary of the Ob.

By the early twenty-first century the language will disappear completely. There are no special studies of it, not counting certain references to it in monographs on Ket. G. K. Verner is the only one studying Yugh; he is preparing a monograph description of this language.

2. *Kerek* (A. P. Volodin, Leningrad) There never were a great number of Kereks; at the beginning of the twentieth century there were 200–400 (in the Chukchee villages Mainypilgino and Khatyrka of the Chukchee autonomous district, Bering region). At the present time the Kerek have more or less been assimilated into the Chukchee community. There remain three persons who understand Kerek: Khatkana (60 years), who speaks the Mainypilgino dialect; Uvagyrgyn (63 years), who speaks the Khatyrka dialect; and Yetynkew (Nikolai), from Mainypilgino .

Among the publications is an essay by P. Ya. Skorik in *Iazyki narodov SSSR* (1968), vol. 5; in manuscript there exist texts by the ethnographer V. V. Leontiev, recorded in the 1960s and 1970s, when there were more speakers. Expeditions were made in 1988 and 1989 during which new texts were recorded, along with a dictionary (4,000–5,000 words) and paradigmatic data. All this information has been entered into the computer data base system ESKER (ES-Kimo + KER-ek). The specialists working actively are A. S. Asinovsky and A. P. Volodin, Also, A. V. Zaitseva is working on a computer program for the Kerek material.

3. *Aleut* (N. B Vakhtin, E. V. Golovko, Leningrad). From 1820 to 1840 dozens of Aleut families were brought by a Russo-American company to the uninhabited Komandor islands from various islands in the Pacific Ocean. Up until the 1960s there were two Aleut villages on Bering Island and Mednyj Island. The inhabitants of Bering Island have a dialect identical to the one spoken on Atka Island (Aleut Islands, USA); on Mednyj Island an Aleut–Russian pidgin has developed.

At present all Aleuts (there are about 300) live in the Nikolskoye settlement on Bering Island. Of them, fifteen to twenty of the older generation speak Aleut. The population of Nikolskoye (around 1,500) is predominantly Russian. The children and young adults speak only Russian.

It will not be possible to preserve the Aleut language within the borders of the Soviet Union. The data for this language are being documented at the Leningrad branch of the Institute of Linguistics. Works prepared for publication are: E. V. Golovko, N. B. Vakhtin and A. S. Asinovsky, 'Language of the Komandor Aleuts'; E. V. Golovko, *Aleut-Russian/Russian-Aleut Dictionary*.

Group II.

This group includes 'terminally ill' languages in great need of active support and documentation.

4. *Orok* (L. I. Sem, Leningrad) According to official records of the Sakhalin region in 1979 there were 317 Oroks or ul'ta, ujlt'a. They live in certain specific areas on Sakhalin Island, in Poronajsk district (Poronajsk town, single families; in Gastello and Vakhrushev, settlements) and Nogliki district (village of Val, single families; in Nogliki, settlement). Oroks also live on the Japanese island of Hokkaido. There are noteworthy differences between the southern (Poronajsk) and northern (Val and Nogliki) dialects.

A sharp transition is observed between high proficiency in Orok (the older generation) and complete ignorance (children, adolescents, young adults). The middle generation has only partial proficiency in the language.

The Orok have relinquished their traditional way of life. Inter-marriage – with Russians, Nivkh, Nanai, Evenksi, Negidal and Koreans – has become prevalent.

Currently working actively on the Orok language are L. I. Sem and Yu. A. Sem.

5. *Enets* (I. P. Sorokina, Leningrad; E. A. Khelimsky, Moscow) The Enets live on the Taimyr peninsula in the lower reaches of the Yenisei upstream of Dudinka, in their native territories. There are two barely mutually intelligible dialects: 'Forest' (*bay/pe-bae*) in the Potapovo settlement of the Dudinka region, and 'Tundra' (*madu/somatu*) in the Vorontzovo settlement of the Ust-Yenisei region. In some settlements Nenets and Russians live with the Enets. All Enets who speak their native language are bilingual or trilingual.

The ethnic group is bordering on extinction, assimilating with the Nenets (keeping the traditional ways of life) or the Russians (with a transition to modern forms). Intra-ethnic marriage is uncommon. Children and adolescents do not speak Enets; of the young adults, only a few individuals know the language; and of the middle-aged, no more than half. In twenty years full mastery of the language will be very rare.

Presently working with the Enets language is I. P. Sorokina; she is preparing a grammar of the Forest dialect. Material exists on the grammar of the Tundra dialect (E. A. Khelimsky, E. Yu. Ryzhova, E. V. Grushkina).

6. *Negidal* (I. V. Nedyalkov, Leningrad) There is a dense population of Negidal living in their native lands in the lower reaches of the Amur, in two regions of the Khabarovsk Krai: Ulch (Kamenka settlement, Im) and in the Paulina Osipenko region. The way of life of this ethnic group is traditional. Contacts exist with other ethnic groups of the Amur area – the Ulch, Nanai and Nivkh, with whom mixed marriages occur. Of the 500 Negidal only 200 speak their ethnic language: they mostly belong to the older generation. In twenty to thirty years, the language may disappear. There exists a monograph by V. I. Tsintsius, *The Negidal Language* (Leningrad, Nauka, 1982, 311 pp.), containing a grammar, texts and a dictionary.

Presently working on this language is M. M. Khasanova (Novosibirsk).

7. *Itelmen* (A. P. Vologin, Leningrad) The Western Itelmen language has been preserved to the present day (the Southern disappeared at the turn of the twentieth century; the Eastern, in the first third of the century). The Itelmen (numbering about 1,500) live on the Kamchatka peninsula in the Tigil region of the Koryak autonomous district, mostly in the villages Kovran and Upper Khairiuzovo (the western coast of the Kamchatka river). The ethnic self-consciousness is poorly expressed. Those who speak their ethnic language number fewer than 100, primarily the older generation; for children it is practically a foreign language, although it is taught as a subject through to the fourth grade. In 1988 a primer was written, and in 1989, a school dictionary. However, it is likely that the language will become extinct in twenty to thirty years.

Specialists on the Itelmen language are A. P. Volodin, A. S. Asinovsky, and on Itelmen ethnography N. K. Starkova (Vladivostok), now retired.

8. *Udihe* (A. Kh. Girfanova, Leningrad) In the nineteenth century the Udihe lived in the basins of the rivers Khor, Aniui, Samarga, Bikin and Iman. Today they live in the Khabarovski

Krai (Gvasiugi settlement, Lazo region; Arsenievo settlement, Nanai region) and in the Primorski Krai (Krasny Yar settlement in the Pozharsk region, Agzu settlement in the Terneisk region).

There are about 1,600 Udihe in the Soviet Union, of whom not many more than 100 speak Udihe. The Udihe live in a Russian language environment. Thus, in the Arsenievo settlement, of the 420 residents, 50 are Udihe, 225 are Russians and 118 are Ukrainians; in the Gvasiugi settlement, of the 240 residents, 156 are Udihe, and the rest are Russians, Ukrainians and Nanai (figures are from 1986).

Because of the resettlement into artificial villages, the change in ethnic composition of the population since the 1920s and 1930s, and the raising of children in boarding schools since the 1950s and 1960s, the major part of the Udihe population no longer speaks Udihe. All speakers of Udihe are older than fifty years. It is possible that the language will become extinct in thirty years.

Actively working with Udihe are A. Kh. Girfanova (Leningrad), M. D. Simonov (Novosibirsk); and also E. V. Perekhval'skaya and V. I. Belikov (Moscow), within the framework of the programme 'Cultural Initiative' of the international foundation Soros.

Group III.

This is a group of seriously threatened languages, historically very close to Group II. At the same time, in recent years the positive political moves with respect to the least widely spoken languages, the creation of elementary school language classes, and growth in ethnic self-consciousness may hold back the transition of these languages to Groups II and I in the foreseeable future.

9. *Asiatic Eskimo* (N. B. Vakhtin, Leningrad) Eskimos live in southeastern Chukotka, and also in northeastern Chukotka. Of the 1,200–1,500 Asiatic Eskimos, 300 speak the Eskimo language. There are actually two separate languages of the Asiatic Eskimo group. One of them, old Sireniki (Sireniki village), has all but completely disappeared: only two speakers remain. The other is a language which falls into two isolated dialects, with a mutual intelligibility of 60 to 70 per cent: Chaplino (around 200 speakers, who reside in the Providenie region in the villages Novo-Chap-

lino and Providenie) and Naukan (around 100 speakers, who reside in the Chukotka region, villages Laurence, Lorino and Whalen). The Chaplino live in rather compact communities; the Naukans live in more scattered communities within a predominantly Chukchee and Russian-speaking area. Contact with Saint Laurence Island (USA) has had some influence on the growth of ethnic self-consciousness. On this island reside speakers of the Chaplino dialect, close relatives of the Chaplins.

Only the older generation has active command of the language; the middle generation (35–50 years) has a passive knowledge, and the children know only what they have been taught in school. The Chaplino dialect is taught as a school subject through to the fourth grade.

The Chaplino dialect may undergo a rebirth because of the contacts with the American island. For the Naukans, documentation must be made soon.

Presently working professionally on Asiatic Eskimo in N. B. Vakhtin.

10. *Yukaghir* (N. B. Vakhtin, Leningrad; I. A. Nikolaeva, Moscow) The Yukaghir (who call themselves the Odul) reside in the Yakut Soviet Republic in their original homeland. In the nineteenth century their territory shrunk severely as a result of merging clans, military clashes, assimilation with the Even – and during the Soviet period, as a result of the policy of collectivisation. The Yukaghir population has likewise fallen to a tenth of its former size, and the process is continuing. Thus in the 1950s the influence of Yukaghir and Yakut collective farms led to the loss of one Yukaghir group at the Korkodon river and the loss of one of the dialects.

There exist two dialects, set apart geographically, one in the Upper Kolyma region (Southern/Kolyma dialect, Zyrianka and Nelemnoe settlements) and one in the Lower Kolyma region (Northern/Tundra dialect, Andriushkino and Kolymskoe settlements). According to the 1989 census there are about 1,100 Yukaghir. However, only 150 of the Tundra region and fifty from Upper Kolyma speak Yukaghir.

The Yukaghir have been living in a multilingual environment for the past 200 years. At present they reside in multinational settlements together with Evens, Yakuts, Russians and Chukchees; their principal language of communication is Russian.

As to active knowledge of the language, only people older than 50 speak the Southern dialect; only those older than 35–40 speak the Tundra dialect. Children and young adults do not know the language beyond some individual words. Among the southern Yukaghir there are only a handful who consider Yukaghir their native language.

Since the mid-1980s Yukaghir has been taught in the settlements Andriushkino (through to the fourth grade) and Nelemnoe (through to the eighth grade).

Actively working on Yukaghir are I. A. Nikolaeva (Moscow), E. S. Maslova (Leningrad), G. N. Kurilov (Yakutsk), V. Fesner (Hamburg, Germany).

11. Alutor The Alutor live in the northeast part of the Kamchatka peninsula, in the Koryak national district. They are living mostly in the villages Vyvenka and Rekinniki, separated from each other by a considerable distance and without regular contact. Individual families live in Talichiki, Ossora and Palana. The approximate number of Alutor is 800, but only a small number of them speak the Alutor language. Thus, of the 400 living in Vyvenka, fewer than 100 speak the language.

The old generation speaks Alutor actively; for some of them it is their only language. The middle-aged generation knows the language passively, and Alutors younger than 35 years in general know only Russian. For the most part, such a rapid decline in the language is the consequence of the forced confinement of all children in boarding schools from a very early age, from the 1950s through to the 1970s. In recent years, attempts have been made in schools to revitalise the language, but instead of the native Alutor, another closely related Koryak language is taught, one that differs markedly from the mother tongue.

No one is currently working actively on the language. There does exist a large manuscript archive from three expeditions, compiled in the 1970s under the direction of A. E. Kibrik (Moscow), with the participation of S. V. Kodzasov, I. A. Muravieva, I. A. Mel'chuk and others (Leningrad). Field recordings have been made by A. N. Zhukova (Leningrad).

12. Nivkh (E. Yu. Gruzdeva, Leningrad) Traditionally, since the middle of the twentieth century, the Nivkh have resided in the lower reaches of Amur, along the coast of the Tatar channel

on the northwest and eastern coasts of Sakhalin Island. In the 1960s and 1970s their place of residence changed because of their forced resettlement. Many sites of settlement in the lower reaches of the Amur and on Sakhalin Island were liquidated. Currently, substantial groups of Nivkh are living on Sakhalin Island, in the villages Nekrasovka and Nogliki. Small numbers of Nivkh are also concentrated in the villages Rybnoe, Moskalvo, Chir-Unvd, Viakhtu and others, and along the Amur, in the village Aleevka.

According to 1979 census figures the Nivkh number 4,420. However, sociolinguistic data gathered in the village of Nogliki for one Nivkh group show that only about 20 per cent (60 out of 315) have an active knowledge of Nivkh. No more than 400 Nivkh on Sakhalin have an active knowledge of the language, and on the Amur the number is significantly less.

There are three dialects: Amur, North Sakhalin and East Sakhalin. The difference between the Amur and East Sakhalin is significant; mutual intelligibility is low. The North Sakhalin dialect occupies a middle position.

For the most part, those who speak the language are over 50 years old. At the beginning of the 1980s, instruction in Nivkh was given in the first and second grades at the villages Nekrasovka and Nogliki. Nivkh is not taught in the Amur area.

Unless decisive measures are taken for the preservation and development of the language, it will die out soon. Actively working for the revival of Nivkh culture and language is the writer Vladimir Sanghi, president of the Association of Peoples of the North. Professionally working with the Nivkh language is E. Yu. Gruzdeva.

Group IV.

This is a group of chronically ill languages, which, however, have kept up some resistance, and with the proper political and socio-cultural support may in the immediate future maintain their present condition.

13. *Oroch* (L. I. Sem) The Oroch live in the Khabarovski Krai along the rivers that empty into the Tatar channel, on the Amur River not far from the city of Komsomolsk-na-Amure. A great number of them live in the Vanino region in the settlements Datta

and Uska-Orochskaya. Living with the Oroch are Russians, Ukrainians and Evenkis. A few Oroch live among the Nanai.

In the 1979 census the Oroch were numbered at 1,200; the number of speakers of the native language was not recorded. The ethnic language is not taught at school. Children and young people up to twenty years, as a rule, do not speak the language. The older generation and the middle-aged do speak their ethnic language.

Unless special measures are taken, the language will be threatened by extinction.

14. *Ulch* (L. I. Sem, Leningrad) The Ulch (Olch, Olcha) live in the Ulch region of the Khabarovski Krai along the Amur River and its tributaries, along the coast of the Tatar channel. The main sites of settlement are Bogorodskoe (the capital of the region), Bulava, Dudi, Kalinovka, Mariinskoe, Nizhnaya Gavan', Savinskoe, Mongol, Solontsy, Kolchom, Sofiyskoe, Tur and Ukhta. According to the 1979 census, there are 2,500 Ulch. They live in close contact with Russians, Ukrainians, Nanai, Nivkh, Negidal, and other nationalities; their *lingua franca* is Russian.

The older generation knows the language; the middle, less well; adolescents and young adults, mostly passively. Children under ten years do not speak the language. In recent years Ulch has been taught in the first grade of elementary school.

Professionally working with the Ulch language are L. I. Sem and Yu. A. Sem (Leningrad).

15. *Nganasan* (E. A. Khelimsky, Moscow) The Nganasan live in the peninsula of Taimyr in the villages Ust-Avam (Dudinka region), Volochanka and Novaya (Khatang region). They are concentrated in several villages formerly used as winter quarters or as trading posts along migratory routes. This took place in the 1940s with the formation of collective farms, state farms, and state industrial plants. Before their settlement in villages the Nganasan had had intermittent contact with the Tundra Enets and with the Nenets. Bilingualism and trilingualism was widespread, but was often passive: when communicating, each would speak in his own language. After settlement, close contacts were established with Russians, Ukrainians, Belorussians and Tatars; their *lingua franca* is Russian.

Ethnic self-consciousness is strong; good knowledge of the

Nganasan language adds to one's status. The Nganasan number about 900. The older and middle generations and approximately one-third of the children and adults under 30 have a full command of the language. Knowledge of the language is somewhat more widespread in the village of Volochanka.

Attempts are being made to introduce Nganasan into the school curriculum as a subject, but for the schoolchildren it is like instruction in a foreign language.

Special measures to document the language will be most effective during the course of the next ten to fifteen years. Actively working with the language are E. A. Khelimsky (Moscow), N. Kovalenko (Novosibirsk), E. Boldt (Barnaul), L. Afonina (Leningrad), J. Mikola (Hungary) and especially M. Katzschmann (Germany).

16. *Selkup* (E. A. Khelimsky, Moscow) The Selkup live in West Siberia in the Yamalo-Nenets autonomous district, the Krasnoyarski Krai and in the Tomskaya Oblast (region).

As early as the nineteenth century, the Selkup language constituted a dialectal continuum (Taz-Tym-Narym-Srednyaya Ob'-Ket') with difficult or no mutual intelligibility between speakers of the extreme dialects. The main dialects are the northern one (Krasnoselkup region: villages Krasnoselkup, Sidorovsk, Tolka, Ratta, Kikiyakki; part of the Purovsk region: the village Tolka Purovskaya; adjacent regions of the Krasnoyarski Krai: the village Kureika, Kellog, the river basin of Turukhan and Baikha) and the southern one (a range of villages in the northern part of the Tomskaya Oblast).

The Selkup population is numbered at 4,500, of whom approximately one-half speaks the ethnic language. The northern dialect is more stable, spoken by about 90 per cent of the Northern Selkup; the southern dialect is spoken by no more than 30 per cent of the Southern Selkup, and by no more than 10 per cent with any proficiency. The traditional *lingua franca* for the Northern Selkup and neighbouring peoples (Ket, Evenki, Nenets, Khanty) was Selkup, but now this language has been crowded out by Russian. The Southern Selkup all live in a Russian environment.

Recently, steps have been taken to renew the writing system and raise the prestige of the language. In the northern regions, Selkup is taught at the elementary school level. The middle and

older generation have a good command of the language; most children, adolescents and young adults speak the language with some degree of proficiency, but often have not mastered it entirely. Matters are significantly worse among the Southern Selkup: the younger generation generally does not speak the language. Full mastery of the ethnic language is found among some people of the middle and older generation. In twenty years the southern dialect may disappear completely, and complete knowledge of the northern dialect would become a rarity. Special measures are necessary to secure the relatively stable southern varieties (Tym, Kety).

Actively working with the Selkup language are E. A. Khe-limsky, A. I. Kuznetsova, O. A. Kazakevich, E. V. Grushkina (Moscow), A. I. Gashilov (Leningrad), E. G. Becker, Yu. A. Morev, Sh. Ts. Kuper and others (Tomsk), I. Yanurik (Hungary), H. Katz (Germany).

17. *Ket* (G. K. Verner, Taganrog) The Ket live in their native territory in the Turukhansk and Baikitsk regions of the Krasnoyarski Krai in the villages Sulomai, Bakhta, Verkhneimbatsk, Kellog, Kangatovo, Surgutikha, Vereshchagino, Baklanikha, Farkovo, Goroshikha and Maiduka. Their population is about 1,200. Most of them (80–85 per cent) speak their ethnic language, but they often avoid using it. The ethnic language is taught as a subject in five schools.

In twenty-five to thirty years the language may find itself on the verge of extinction, unless school instruction is strengthened or traditional ways of life are revived.

The language has been studied and described satisfactorily. Currently working actively in the area of Ket language studies are G. K. Verner, E. I. Blinov, R. F. Denning, G. J. Polenova and others.

Group V.

Into this group we may place a series of unwritten languages that currently continue to be used in everyday family communication by small ethnic groups. These groups live in their native territories, very limited in size (one or a few villages), and to a certain degree hold on to their traditional ways of life. At the same time, these ethnic languages are being crowded out by one or more

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languages with wider social functions; therefore it cannot be ruled out that a change in the sociopolitical environment might lead in the foreseeable future to a transition of these languages to Groups IV and III. We shall limit ourselves to enumerating them.

- Caucasian languages: Hinukh (Daghestan); Hunzib (Daghestan); Archi (Daghestan); Khinalugh (Azerbaijan); Budukh (Azerbaijan); Khvarshi, Tindi (Daghestan); Ghodoberi (Daghestan); Udi (Azerbaijan, Georgia); Kryts (Azerbaijan); Bats (Georgia); Svan (Georgia).
- Pamir languages, Iranian group: Ishkashimi, Oroshani, Khufi, Yazgulami, Yagnobi, Bartangi, Sarikoli, Rushani.

These languages are potentially threatened by extinction. They deserve serious study for which there are excellent opportunities.

Translated by A. Eulenberg