(Socio)linguistic outcomes of social reorganization in Chukotka

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Although we often speak of "languages" as discrete entities that can be adopted and abandoned, they are more than just neutral tools that speakers pragmatically apply to different situations. Language is also not merely a constellation of grammatical features shaped by the constraints on human cognition and articulation. There is a demonstrable, intrinsic link between language and culture: languages do not exist without their speakers and are shaped by their speakers' lifeways in manners great and small. The ways that linguistic practices change in response to the circumstances of linguistic users has been well-explored in linguistic anthropology and studies of language contact, especially in cases of intense historical change and social upheaval. One of the outcomes of contact between speakers of different languages, especially when one group has greater political or economic capital, is *language shift*: the process by which a group ceases to speak their heritage language in favor of another language, whether due to explicit or tacit prohibition of the continued use of the heritage language or simply due to the favorability of the new language for participation in society. The implementation of measures to discourage or outlaw existing language use is a powerful strategy seen often in the initial colonial context that forms the backdrop of many cases of language endangerment. Throughout Siberia, the initial official position of the Soviet government was one of stewardship of the indigenous languages and promotion of literacy in these languages (Forsyth, 1992, p. 283), and efforts were undertaken to train indigenous Siberians to become educators in their own languages (Grenoble, 2003, Chapter 7). Language policy throughout the mid-20th century, however, tells a more complicated story. Russian language instruction was made obligatory in schools in 1938; in 1959, this policy was modified to allow parents to choose instruction in Russian or the indigenous language (Forsyth, 1992, pp. 406–407). By this point, however, the devaluation and stigmatization of indigenous languages was well underway, with most parents opting for Russian instruction over indigenous instruction anyway. Thus, although indigenous languages were not prohibited outright, they were edged out by language policy that favored Russian, on the one hand, and by practices

on the ground at boarding schools where speakers were ridiculed or punished for using their indigenous languages, on the other.

In the modern era, globalization has been a powerful force in accelerating the pace of language shift worldwide: estimates of language endangerment vary, but an oft-quoted forecast by Austin and Sallabank (2011) predicts that at least 50% (and as many as 90%) of the world's languages will become extinct by the end of this century. Most of this loss is no longer driven by active efforts to extinguish the languages or their speakers, but by the sociopolitical ecologies in which speakers find themselves in a rapidly changing world. Access to social mobility, education, and even information can depend on the acquisition of the locally-dominant language; in many cases, there is still a third, super-dominant language (often, English) that speakers are pressured to master. Although bi- and even trilingualism exists stably in various parts of the world (and once existed throughout Chukotka, see Pupynina & Koryakov, 2019), it is precisely the social conditions of language shift that preclude balanced multilingualism. The political or cultural cachet associated with the speakers of the dominant language comes at the expense of the language being lost: on the one hand, the heritage language loses value for its speakers as it is relegated to a smaller set of domains and on the other, use of the heritage language can become associated with, or can *index* (Labov, 1972; Silverstein, 2003) pejorative stereotypes about the minority group, which further disincentivizes use of the language.

Nowhere are the pernicious cultural effects of the push towards globalization and modernization more apparent than among the indigenous peoples of Siberia, who have had to contend with a two-fold threat to their ways of life: social turmoil over the last 100 years as well as a rapidly changing climate. For millennia, the autochthonous peoples of Chukotka (Chukchi, Koryaks, Itelmens, Evens, Yukaghirs, and Siberian Yupiks) had maintained stable subsistence living in the harsh tundra climate, practicing nomadic reindeer herding, hunting, and fishing (in the case of Chukchi people, all of the above). While relations among these groups were not always amicable and there is evidence of population shifts, with Chukchi groups absorbing conquered Yukaghir, Koryak, and Yupik populations, these shifts were not profound enough to result in wholesale linguistic or cultural loss. The arrival of Russian colonists in the 17th century upended this ecosystem and initiated a reconfiguration of these traditional lifeways,

culminating in the forced reorganization and settlement of indigenous groups and active Russification efforts by the 20th century.

In this chapter, I focus on Chukchi people and the ways that this social ecology has contributed to a reduction in language use and transmission (language shift) as well as changes to the grammatical structure and domains of use of Chukchi. This chapter illustrates that although the Chukchi language is presently moribund, it is neither linguistically decaying nor interactionally dormant. Rather, speakers of Chukchi have adapted the language, in terms of structure and practice, to their modern social surroundings.

Chukchi in its sociohistorical context

Archaeological and paleontological findings place the origins of the Chukotko-Kamchatkan ethnic group (which would ultimately splinter into the Chukchi, Koryaks, Kereks, Alutors, and Itelmens) along the Sea of Okhotsk on the Kamchatka peninsula (Levin, 1963). Originally subsistence hunters, Chukchis have always shown an aptitude for adapting to new lifestyles as they migrated throughout northeastern Siberia, initially adopting reindeer-herding from Tungusic-speaking peoples (de Reuse, 1994, p. 296). Archaeological evidence shows that the Chukchi reached the Anadyr River basin in the fourth to fifth centuries A.D., motivated by the search for additional pastures; some Chukchi further migrated to the Bering coast by the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries, adopting a maritime economy that largely resembled that of the Siberian Yupiks they displaced or assimilated around the same time (Ackerman, 1984, pp. 115, 118).

Sources (Vakhtin, 1998; Dunn, 1999; de Reuse, 1994, 1996) largely agree that the Chukchi were regarded as the most politically and economically dominant group in northeastern Siberia at the time of initial Russian contact in the 17th century, a fact that was reflected in their linguistic practices at the time: Chukchis conducted all commerce with members of other ethnic groups in Chukchi and refused to learn other indigenous languages (de Reuse, 1994, p. 296). One strategy they employed was to use a simplified Chukchi "jargon" with their foreign interlocutors, though the restricted contexts of these jargons (between

Chukchi and non-Chukchi speakers) meant that they did not survive for long and did not produce any identifiable changes in the language at large. Many Chukchi were in a position to employ these practices not only with other indigenous groups but also western colonists, traders, and explorers well into the 19th century. These included early waves of Russian colonists, with whom the Chukchi were happy to trade, although they refused to pay tribute to the Russian tsars (Forsyth, 1992, p. 80; Sverdrup, 1978, pp. 213–215)—a fact that sets them apart from other Siberian indigenous groups, all of whom ultimately succumbed to the practice, and of which many Chukchi remain markedly proud. Later expeditions by Americans and Swedes encountered similar linguistic ideologies. An American member of an Arctic expedition in Plover Bay (1848-1849) reported that the Chukchi "did not learn English nearly so quickly as many of us acquired their tongue" (Hooper, 1853, p. 33). Similarly, a Swedish explorer in the Vega expedition (1878-1879) explicitly described the Chukchi tendency "to adopt the mistakes, in the pronunciation or meaning of words [in Chukchi] that were made on the Vega" (Nordenskiöld, 1882, p. 369). Members of the expedition made note of several example sentences in the jargon, many of which take the form of an initial descriptive particle word plus the noun to which it applies, with no copula verb and minimal inflection (Parkvall & Dunn, 2019, from an example recorded by Nordenskiöld):

(1)   *ouinga mouri   kauka*

      NEG   1PL   food

      'I have no food' (Note the use of a plural pronoun for 'I'.)

In this way, this jargon was typical of contact varieties that emerge out of communicative necessity and grammatically resembles other pidgins elsewhere in the world (Bakker, 1994). We can compare this construction with a native Chukchi equivalent, which requires 1st person agreement marking on a nominalized negation particle as well as privative case marking on the word 'food':

(2)   *ujŋə-ɬʔə-muri   a-kawkaw-ka*

      NEG-NMLZ-1PL PRIV-food-PRIV

'I have no food (I am one who is without food)'

Beyond these jargons, there is minimal linguistic evidence that the Chukchi language (as spoken by the Chukchi people) underwent significant contact-induced change prior to the 20th century. Changes during the period prior to and in the early phases of Russian colonization is of the kind we expect in situations of stable multilingualism (Thomason, 2001): borrowing of lexical terminology for items and concepts new to the Chukchi people. Examples include fishing and whaling terms borrowed from Yupik, such as *kupren* 'net' (from Siberian Yupik *kuuvragh-*) and *menemen* 'bait, lure' (from Yupik *managh-*). There are also some older Russian borrowings in Chukchi which likely predate intensive Russian influence, which is evident from the fact that the loanwords have been adapted to Chukchi phonology. These include *caqar* 'sugar' (Russian *saxar*), *caj* 'tea' (Russian *čaj*), and *konekon* 'horse' (Russian *kon'*) (Comrie, 1996, p. 36). Today, some of the more transparent borrowings, such as 'tea', are pronounced with unambiguously Russian phonology. It is also clear that, at the turn of the 20th century, Chukchi was spoken robustly enough that speakers still maintained a process for coining terms for new technology using existing resources in the language. Examples include the word *riŋe-neŋ* 'airplane' (literally 'fly-thing') and *tiŋ-uqqem* 'bottle' (literally 'ice-deep.vessel') (Comrie, 1996, p. 35). Thus, up until around the 1930s, we can observe that speakers of Chukchi were adapting both the structure of their language and their linguistic behavior (e.g., avoidance of bilingualism in favor of the use of jargonized Chukchi) in a way that was neither markedly affecting the grammar of the language nor prompting changes to the settings where Chukchi was used or its transmission to future generations.

The advent of language shift can be seen in the mid-20th century, following the implementation of several highly disruptive policies by the Soviet government. These policies, which culminated in the rupturing of traditional Chukchi social and cultural ties, had three targets: (i) the economic dominance of Chukchi people, (ii) Chukchi culture, and (iii) Chukchi clan structure. The first goal was achieved through the collectivization of reindeer-herding in the 1930s (Dikov, 1989; Forsyth, 1992): individual reindeer herders (some of whom were quite wealthy) had their reindeer seized and reorganized in *sovkhozy* (state-owned farms). As had been their tendency all along, some Chukchi herders violently resisted surrendering

their reindeer; a number of Chukchi (and Russian authorities) lost their lives during this period (Demuth, 2019).

Meanwhile, Chukchi culture was disrupted in several ways; these included the prohibition of shamanic rites (and the capture and extermination of the shamans themselves) as well as educational and linguistic policies aimed at increasing knowledge of Russian and providing access to education more generally. To achieve this, Chukchi children were rounded up and housed at boarding schools (*internat*) for most of the year, except in rare cases where they hid in the tundra when the helicopters came in September, or in cases where they were already residing in settled villages and were permitted to return to their parents on weekends. The latter scenario was no less traumatic for some of the Chukchis I have spoken with, who describe being able to physically see their families on the other side of the fence during the school week, but not communicate with them. While the atmosphere in different *internaty* varied, many of them prohibited the use of the Chukchi language, wearing of traditional Chukchi attire, and even the eating of Chukchi foods, which could be (and often was) enforced with corporal punishment. The result of the *internat* program was interrupted Chukchi language transmission for several generations of speakers, who (at best) spoke Chukchi at home until they were sent to school around the age of 7 or 8. As the *internat* generations grew up and had children of their own, many of them made a deliberate decision not to transmit Chukchi to their children in any capacity, to avoid the stigma and potential abuse for speaking the language.

Finally, the 1950s onward were characterized by a dedicated effort on the part of the Soviet government to "civilize" the nomadic peoples of Siberia, whose lifestyles they viewed as barbaric and untenable within the framework of a modern, collective society (see Kantarovich, 2020 for further discussion). This was addressed through the forced settlement and resettlement of Siberian peoples between 1953 and 1967, without regard for existing ethnic or clan ties. Conditions in these settlements, many of which were makeshift and not set up for long-term residence, were horrific, with Chukchi living in cramped squalor (and in an obvious departure from the traditional dwellings, or *yarangas*, they could erect on-the-go) (Demuth, 2019; Forsyth, 1992, pp. 398–400).

It is not difficult to imagine how these conditions contributed to the decline of the Chukchi language and traditional Chukchi culture, and to the rise of social ills such as unemployment alcoholism, and languishment among a once prestigious ethnic group. While traditional Chukchi lifestyles had been made untenable, they were not replaced with opportunities for gainful participation by Chukchi people in the new society: jobs were limited and often restricted to factory work. These societal changes only affirmed the opinions of the Russian majority that the Siberian peoples were "uncivilized" or "lazy," which in turn served as additional motivation for ethnic Chukchi to place distance between them and their language and culture, by avoiding use of the language in public and ceasing transmission to their children.

The position of Modern Chukchi

Although the language called Chukchi, as it is used today, is very much the same language it was before the onset of shift, it is impossible not to observe changes to its linguistic structure and positionality in the local linguistic ecology. Such changes are especially pronounced among urban dwellers, whose behavior is the main subject of the following sections.

Today, Chukchi is spoken by no more than (roughly) 1,000 speakers (Pupynina & Koryakov, 2019). This number contrasts starkly with the official statistic listed in the (now outdated) 2010 All-Russian Census, which counted 5,095 speakers. It is not the case that 4,000 speakers have been lost in the intervening decade; rather, the number was highly inflated at the time of reporting, and likely includes many ethnic Chukchi with virtually no linguistic knowledge who felt that they should report their ancestral ethnic language as their "mother tongue" (*rodnoj jazyk*). The language is considered moribund—that is, likely to disappear within a few generations—as it is no longer being transmitted to children and second-language learners are few and far between.

The state of education is also not promising: although many proficient Chukchi speakers are actively involved in the creation of educational materials, such as dictionaries and textbooks, the availability and the demand for serious, functional Chukchi instruction is lacking. Where available, Chukchi classes in primary or secondary school meet no more than a couple of hours a week. Chukchi

teachers report that they focus on imparting lexical knowledge: greetings, food terms, flora and fauna. No students graduate from these courses with a workable command of Chukchi grammar or conversation. Some especially plucky instructors have taken to offering courses online or through WhatsApp; here, they face additional technological challenges, which include no WiFi service whatsoever throughout Chukotka (although fiber optic internet has been in the works for years now) and slow cell phone data speeds that inhibit the sharing of videos or video conferencing. These courses are not stratified by proficiency level; thus, most instructors are forced to regularly reteach the well-trodden concepts of greetings and traditional lexical items to bring less-experienced participants up to speed. Chukchi learners looking for grammatical (rather than token) linguistic knowledge report being disappointed and leaving these educational groups and conversation circles.

Based on self-reporting and the author's own ethnographic work with Chukchi in Anadyr (in Chukotka) and Yakutsk (in the Sakha Republic), modern urban speakers fall into the following three categories:

i. Conservative older speakers, typically in their 60s and older, who acquired the language in childhood and continued to maintain it into adulthood. Some of these speakers participated in post-secondary education in Chukchi at the Herzen State Pedagogical University in St. Petersburg and are presently involved in education and research.

ii. Attriting speakers, typically in their 30s-60s, who acquired Chukchi in childhood but ceased to speak it regularly when they began attending school (typically the *internat*) or in adulthood, especially if they married non-Chukchi.

iii. Heritage speakers or second-language (L2) learners, in their 30s or younger, who have made a proactive effort to study Chukchi on their own or in consultation with older speakers. While these learners are ethnic Chukchi and may have grown up hearing the language occasionally, their parents either explicitly declined to use it with them or the learners themselves refused to learn it as children and have only recently developed an interest in their heritage.

For this research, I interviewed Chukchi speakers from a variety of northeast Siberian cities and villages (Anadyr, Uelen, Pevek, and Bilibino in Chukotka, Ayanka in Kamchatka, and Yakutsk and Chersky-Kolymskoe in the Republic of Sakha). While there are exceptions to the groups laid out above, especially in rural areas or where reindeer-herding is still practiced, the extent of language maintenance is roughly the same throughout the Chukchi-speaking communities in Siberia (Pupynina & Koryakov, 2019).

Linguistic peculiarities of Modern Chukchi

All languages change over time. It is not surprising that modern Chukchi speech should differ from the earliest available documentation (Bogoras, 1922) or even more recent sources (Skorik, 1961, 1977; Dunn, 1999). However, in comparing the different categories of modern speaker against the available documentation, it is possible to reconstruct which modern features are changes and which of these changes are particular to the context of language shift. A detailed account of the changes to the morphosyntactic structure of Modern Chukchi is provided by Kantarovich (2020a). This section provides an overview of these changes and discusses several additional results of language shift in Chukchi.

Chukchi is a *polysynthetic* (or an "especially synthetic") language, which means it has an especially elaborate system for building words and can feature multiple lexical roots in a single word. This capacity for word building allows polysynthetic grammars to encode the meaning of an entire sentence in a single word, by uniting a verb along with its subject and object (its arguments) as well as the manner in which the verb was performed (Mithun, 2017). In Chukchi, this is achieved through a combination of verbal agreement marking and derivational processes, such as noun incorporation. As a result, it is rare for conservative speakers of Chukchi to use personal pronouns in addition to agreement on the verb, or to use sentences with a subject, object, and indirect object given as separate words. (Usually, one of the arguments is simply understood from context or else it is incorporated into the verb stem itself, if it is an object, instrument, or location.) Thus, conservative speakers prefer sentences like the following:

(3)   *ŋewəcqet-e   n-ena-n-**paŋ**-o-qen*   nenene

        woman-ERG   HAB-INV-CAUS-**soup**-consume-3sg   child.ABS.SG

        'The woman feeds soup to the child (literally: the woman causes the child to eat soup)'

Here, the "instrument" of the feeding ('soup', indicated in bold) has been combined with the verb stem

('consume'), which is further modified by the causative marker and a morpheme signaling 3rd person

agreement, so that the entire verbal complex *n-ena-n-paŋ-o-qen* means 'she causes him to consume soup'

or 'she feeds him soup'. (The subject and object here, 'woman' and 'child', are given for specificity, but

both are optional if they are understood from context.) Similarly, sentences with a 1st and 2nd person

subject or object never occur with separate pronominal words in the traditional language, except in cases

of emphasis, because they are already part of the verb, as in the following example (the 2nd person 'you'

morpheme in the verb is bolded):

(4)   *mał-pənne-twa-ł*ˀ-**eɣət**

        as.if-sad-be-PART-**2sg**

        'It is as if you are sad (literally: You are like one who is sad)'

In comparison, both attriting and heritage speakers incorporate less often and have a far smaller range of

specific nouns that they will incorporate (typically those that have become part of frozen compounds,

such as *qaa-ɣatək* 'to reindeer-herd'). Instead, they tend to use sentences such as the following, with no

incorporation of specific nouns (5) or redundant use of personal pronouns (6), which conservative

speakers dismiss as unnatural:

(5)   *ŋewəcqet-e   nə-nqametwaw-qen   nenene   əpaŋə-ta*

        woman-ERG   HAB-feed-3sg   child.ABS.SG   soup-INST

        'The woman feeds the child with soup'

(6)   *łuur*   *ə-nan*   *kejŋən*   *ł²u-nin*

suddenly   she-ERG   bear.ABS.SG   see-3sg>3sg

'Suddenly she saw a bear'

Attriting and heritage learners similarly do not build word complexes with conjoined modifiers (which is typical of proficient speech, as in (4)), and tend to express adjectival concepts through predication:

(7)   *əmeł²o*   *nə-tampera-qen*   *kejŋ-ək*   *jara-cəko*

everything   HAB-beautiful-3sg   bear-LOC   house-INESS

'Everything was beautiful in the bear's house'

Predicative sentences of this type are appropriate in the traditional language if the speaker is emphasizing the state conveyed by the adjective; otherwise, it is more appropriate to attributively modify the root noun (here, 'everything' or possibly 'house'). In this case, an attriting speaker is setting the scene, but a more conservative speaker might accomplish the scene-setting alongside an event through attribution:

(8)   *ŋeekkeqej*   *jet-ɣ²e*   *tampera-kejŋə-jara-k*

girl.ABS.SG   come-3sg   beautiful-bear-house-LOC

'The girl arrived at the bear's beautiful house'

There are several explanations for the move towards a smaller (more *analytic*) word-building apparatus. The first (which we can exclude outright) is natural change over time that is not motivated by any circumstantial factors, such as language shift or Russian influence. Although languages need no external influences to develop different morphological structure over time (and in fact, some languages have been argued to cycle between polysynthetic and analytic systems, see Hodge, 1970), we can rule this out in Chukchi on the basis of the abruptness of change: the fact that the first generation of speakers brought up under language shift, the attriting speakers, already show signs of a restricted repertoire of word-building

strategies. Thus, the changes do appear to be linked to the circumstances of decreased language use and transmission. But are they a direct result of decreased language use, or are structural change and communicative behavior both symptoms of societal change?

It turns out these explanations are not mutually exclusive. Although linguistic change in language shift has received surprisingly little attention until relatively recently, a shared feature of languages in situations of unbalanced bilingualism (language shift and heritage varieties of majority languages) is less elaborate morphology. This is true of other polysynthetic languages whose speakers have shifted to another language, including Native American languages such as Cayuga (Mithun, 1989) and Caucasian languages such as Adyghe (Vakhtin & Gruzdeva, 2017). Even heritage speakers of languages with smaller morpheme-to-word ratios (such as Arabic, Russian, and Spanish) display a tendency to preserve analytic constructions over synthetic ones (Polinsky, 2018, sec. 5.1). This is possibly a result of the fact that morphology, especially derivational morphology like modification or noun incorporation, is acquired progressively with time. Even studies of first language acquisition in English have shown that adolescents have greater command of the distribution, interpretation, and production of derivational morphemes than do elementary school children, who are still more proficient than kindergarteners (Tyler & Nagy, 1989; Tilstra & McMaster, 2007). It therefore stands to reason that speakers who have had their acquisition disrupted may not have acquired the full range of morphological strategies that are available to more proficient speakers. These speakers may compensate by imposing grammatical strategies from their dominant language (in this case, Russian, which is more analytic than Chukchi) or by innovating their own practices, or perhaps a combination of both.

Another non-trivial explanation for the shift towards more analytic morphosyntax is the prestigious status of the artificial written or literary language, which was developed by linguists in the mid-20th century and which is the basis for instruction in Chukchi. The literary language is primarily based on eastern, maritime varieties of Chukchi and is regarded as inauthentic by speakers of other dialects, especially those without formal schooling in the language. Perhaps due to the nature of the written word—or unintended Russification on the part of its architects—it also tends to be more analytic, with limited use of incorporation and greater (often redundant) use of unattached pronouns (Dunn, 1999).

Despite these unnatural features, however, it is nevertheless regarded by most speakers as the authoritative version of the language and even highly proficient speakers of vernacular varieties express self-consciousness about their lack of command of the literary language.

There is still another possible explanation for the move away from polysynthetic word-building, which is a sociological one: the urban, less close-knit communities that modern Chukchi find themselves in are less conducive to a polysynthetic configuration. This type of explanation has been proposed for the development of polysynthetic languages in the first place: that they emerge in "societies of intimates" (Trudgill, 2017). Trudgill notes that virtually all polysynthetic languages—which exist in all parts of the world and represent a range of otherwise diverse language families—have certain social phenomena in common. They are characteristic of small, isolated communities with dense social networks and relatively little in- and out-migration, which allows for the development of tightly constrained, interdependent morphological patterns that are easily learned and maintained within the shared knowledge of the intimate group. (They represent the opposite of linguistic varieties that emerge in urban or high-contact environments, such as pidgins and creoles and other contact varieties, which tend to have limited inflection not unlike the Vega pidgin examples above.) While Trudgill's proposal regarding the "simplicity" of urban varieties is overstated and not without its detractors (e.g., Haspelmath, 2018), this account is in part echoed by elder Chukchi speakers themselves. All conservative Chukchi speakers, including those with formal education in the literary language, describe analytic constructions with multiple free-standing words as stilted. These speakers describe their intuitions about these differences in similar ways. In the following example, a proficient vernacular speaker explains why she would not use an indirect object in forming a sentence.

(9)   'We were constantly on the move. For this reason it was necessary to say things quickly, quickly, but in a way that was understood… Here it would just be [a single word], we didn't talk much, you know.'

That is, the lives of Chukchi herders were so intertwined and so focused on a singular goal—tending the reindeer—that single-word utterances were not only well-understood, but were also the norm. Thus, it is to be expected that the loss of the traditional Chukchi lifestyle has produced changes in the frequency of certain types of constructions, especially those that rely heavily on a certain extralinguistic context to be understood.

Sociolinguistic indexical changes in Modern Chukchi

The development of Chukchi stereotypes

The changes to the Chukchi way of life have not only impacted linguistic structure but also language use. The modern sociolinguistic practices of Chukchi speakers can best be understood via the notions of *indexicality* and *enregisterment*. Labov (1972) first described the ways that certain patterns in language, such as sounds, words, or phrases, can become associated with non-linguistic characteristics of the people that use them, a process called *enregisterment* (Agha, 2005). When this has occurred, use of these linguistic patterns by anyone calls up, or *indexes*, these associations, resulting in the development of linguistic *stereotypes*.

It is these stereotypic invocations of Chukchi linguistic practices—which may not accurately represent the way Chukchi presently speak or have ever spoken—that are particularly salient to Chukchi and ethnic Russians, and are most on display in cities such as Anadyr. Gift shops throughout the city and the airport sell paraphernalia depicting Chukchi (or *Chukcha*) caricatures speaking Russian in a stereotypically "Chukchi" way, which is mainly signaled by their overuse of the Russian adverb *odnako* 'however, yet'. Souvenirs with actual instances of the Chukchi language are non-existent.

The Chukcha character is also featured prominently in Russian jokebooks and is a salient figure to ethnic Russians throughout the Russian-speaking world, many of whom are unaware that the character is based on a real ethnic group. The Chukcha is typically depicted in Russian jokes as simple-minded and happy-go-lucky (Burykin, 2002), not unlike the "dumb blonde" archetype in the United States. The

character often uses the stereotypic *odnako* or is otherwise portrayed as having bad Russian grammar or pronunciation, always in the context of being tricked or misunderstanding a situation:

(10)   *Odnaždy, Chukcha prines v redakciju svoj roman. Redaktor pročital i govorit:*

         - Ponimaete li, slabovato… Vy Turgeneva čitali? A Tolstogo? A Dostoevskogo?

         - Odnako, net. Chukcha ne čitatel', Chukcha – pisatel'.

         'Once, Chukcha brought his novel to a publisher. The publisher read it and said:

         - You see, it's a little weak. Have you read Turgenev? What about Tolstoy? Or Dostoevsky?

         - However, no. Chukcha is not a reader, Chukcha is a writer.'

As Burykin notes, this punchline—'Chukcha is not a reader, Chukcha is a writer'—is so well-known in Russian circles that use of the phrase indexes the entire joke, as well as the broader stereotypic simple-minded attitude it is tapping into.

Given the history of the storied Chukchi resistance to Russian colonization, it is not surprising (and does not escape the notice of Chukchis themselves) that their people were selected to be an especial butt of Russian jokes. In fact, it was one of the first topics brought to my attention when I arrived in Anadyr, when a new acquaintance said, "You've probably heard of us from jokes and think we all say *odnako*; I don't know where that came from." That said, there is no question that this depiction ofChukchi people in the broader Russian imagination is harmful to the status of both Chukchi language and culture and does little to motivate new generations to connect with their heritage.

There are other less insulting—but no less tokenizing—instances of Chukchi language on display throughout Anadyr, which is the capital of the Chukotka Autonomous Okrug and what is supposed to be the "Chukchi region." Perhaps hearteningly, there are a handful of restaurants and shops with Chukchi names, although their signage tends not to use Cyrillic orthography that is specific to Chukchi, such that the velar nasal (ӈ) is always written as alveolar (н). Examples include a convenience store called *Unpener* 'North Star' (actually *unpeӈer* in Chukchi) and a restaurant called *Ener* 'Star' (actually *eӈer*). Note that

this is not merely a matter of spelling, as these two nasal sounds are treated completely independently by Chukchi's phonological system. This orthographic substitution may exist as a matter of convenience when it comes to signage, to allow for easier legibility (and online searchability) among non-speakers. It is worth noting, however, that such considerations are not generally at play in less-marginalized Siberian languages, such as Sakha, which is used ubiquitously on signage throughout the city of Yakutsk, even though it is only about 50% Sakha (2010 All-Russian Census).

There are also several large posters of Chukotkan animals posted throughout Anadyr, along with their names in Chukchi and Russian (Figure 1), and posters touting the progress of development in the Chukotka region, which include both Russian and Chukchi sentences (Figure 2). Note that in both images, the Chukchi text is considerably smaller than the Russian.

Figure 1.   **Figure 2**.

Both uses of the Chukchi language in these posters are problematic, though in different ways. The first, the word *qoraŋə* 'reindeer', has been misspelled as *qoranə* (much like the business names mentioned above). The second provides an example of the redundant use of separate pronominal words even though the subject is already marked on the verb (***Muri** nəmejŋən-**muri*** '**We** grow-**we**'), indicating a preference for the literary language in creating signage, even if the resulting sentence would be judged bizarre by

many speakers. Thus, we see here how the Chukchi language is virtually invisible in the capital, while an unflattering portrayal of the people has been commercialized and is sold to tourists.

Modern linguistic practices among the Chukchi in Anadyr

This backdrop provides additional context for the setting of modern Chukchi linguistic practices. For social-indexical reasons, many ethnic Chukchi do not want to learn the language and decline to speak it if they do know it, so as to avoid association with an indigenous (or specifically Chukchi) identity. Indeed, there is a noticeable pan-Russian identity at work throughout Siberia, which promotes the notion of many cultures and languages united within one motherland; thus, many ethnic Chukchi see themselves as Russian first and Chukchi second, regardless of what is indicated in their passports. In 2019, I attended a festival in Anadyr commemorating Russia Day, a patriotic holiday celebrated throughout the Russian Federation annually in June. The Anadyr festival featured Siberian Yupik and Chukchi traditional dancing interspersed with Russian ballads and poetry singing the praises of Russia and its vast diversity. Neither Chukchi nor Yupik were spoken during the festival.

Other young Chukchi may not have such a traumatic association with their heritage, but they describe their lack of interest in Chukchi as pragmatic: they must devote their efforts first to mastering Russian, and second to mastering English so that they can be competitive for jobs in Moscow and Petersburg (and possibly outside Russia). It is common for indigenous Siberians to treat language learning as a zero-sum game, where mastering multiple additional languages is not feasible. This view is shared by some older speakers: one Chukchi teacher told me that she believed there was no point in learning Chukchi just to speak it poorly, and that students should concentrate their efforts on fully mastering Russian instead. This sentiment is remarkably prevalent among speakers of several distinct indigenous languages in Siberia with whom I have spoken, which suggests that it stems from a common pan-Russian source. The Russian education system places an extreme emphasis on full fluency in the Russian standard language; multilingual language use in the home is generally viewed as a hindrance in this effort.

Nevertheless, there is a visible community of younger Chukchis who participate in the maintenance of their heritage, whether through the arts or through language learning and scholarship. In Anadyr, Chukchi continues to be spoken regularly by older conservative speakers, who use it amongst themselves and occasionally with their children and other younger speakers. To a lesser extent, it is also used by attriting and heritage speakers. One heritage speaker is involved in producing local radio broadcasts in Chukchi and engages in Chukchi translation in her spare time. In addition, there is a cultural meeting group called *Eek* 'Lamp', which hosts lectures and discussions at the Museum Center in Anadyr. These meetings are typically closed with tea and conversation in Russian and Chukchi. At one of these tea gatherings that I attended, speakers of different backgrounds briefly shared autobiographical information in Chukchi, but most of the conversation took place in Russian (largely for my benefit, but also for that of the other attendees with limited Chukchi proficiency). It is also worth noting that the frame of the interaction—where each attendee formally introduces him or herself and quickly cedes the floor—resembles a Russian one more than a Siberian one, where turn-taking was not so constrained in traditional discourse.

Heritage learners are in an especially delicate position with respect to language maintenance. The older conservative speakers guide Chukchi language ideologies by example and with overt linguistic prescriptivism. Older speakers view any departure from the language of their childhoods as incorrect and are not shy about conveying this to learners. As a result, new speakers and younger attriting speakers find themselves trying to reconcile a tension between being encouraged to carry on Chukchi culture, but having their speech be strongly stigmatized for not conforming to an ideal that is difficult to acquire via pedagogical materials. Some heritage learners approach this tension by focusing their linguistic efforts on cultural outputs: learning and writing poetry and songs and engaging in translation. In this way, they maintain a positive indexical use of Chukchi—as a way to signal their heritage and membership in the Chukchi community—but are able to confine their language use to carefully curated, non-spontaneous contexts where they can avoid errors.

Overuse of exotic features

Some of these social-indexical efforts to signal Chukchi heritage are done linguistically. Some attriting speakers, who have acquired the traditional language to some extent, tend to over-use certain features that are "exotic" in the Russian context, such as incorporation and other types of productive derivation. Some of these patterns are attested among conservative speakers and in older descriptions of Chukchi, but they are not necessarily frequently used. For example, one of the younger attriting speakers, who is a very adept and eloquent storyteller, made frequent use of the derivational morpheme *-łqəł*, which means 'equivalent to X', 'used for X', or 'necessary to X' when applied to nouns. She used this derivation in cases where it is not entirely felicitous and where a simple participle would be more appropriate, to mean 'appearing like one who Vs':

(11) *kejŋ-e*   *ləɣi*   *n-ine-łɣə-qin*   **eɣtełə-lʾə-łqəł**

bear-ERG   know   HAB-INV-be-3sg   remain.alive-NMLZ-EQUIV

oʔrawetłʾən

person.ABS.SG

'A bear knows how much life is left to a person (=a person is **like one who remains alive**)'

(12) *ewə*   *petłe*   **wʾi-lʾə-łqəł**   *ləɣen*   *re-piri-ɣ-nin*

if   soon   die-NMLZ-EQUIV   just   FUT-take-FUT-3sgA.3sgO

re-nu-ɣ-nin

FUT-eat-FUT-3sgA.3sgO

'If (he) is **like one who is about to die**, (the bear) will just take (him) and eat (him)'

Such linguistic practices serve to underscore the creative potential and continued viability that persists even in moribund languages such as Chukchi. As its social setting has changed, the Chukchi language has been adapted by its speakers to serve their needs, whether they are communicative (in the case of the move from polysynthesis) or indexical (used to signal their participation in the Chukchi

community). While the Chukchi case serves as an example of "language loss," it is also an example of the resilience of a language and its speakers and the important role minority languages play in identity construction in society.

Conclusion

The case of Chukchi (as well as other languages in the Russian North) serves as a stark illustration of the tight link between a language—its structure and its use—and its social context. The available information about the Chukchi language across time reveals how language is adapted by its speakers to suit their needs, whatever those needs may be at distinct points throughout history. For much of Chukchi's history, the language enjoyed an elevated status in the local social ecology: it was a *lingua franca* used in trade throughout the Russian Far North East, with Chukchi speakers developing simplified jargons for use with trading partners and reserving the "real" language for use with other Chukchi interlocutors. Evidence of the other ethnic groups the Chukchis lived among (or absorbed) is also written into the structure and lexicon of the language; examples include the borrowing of words for maritime flora and fauna from the Siberian Yupiks living along the Bering coast when the Chukchis arrived there in the 17th century.

Some of the effects of social context on linguistic structure are more subtle and not merely a reflection of different ethnic groups interacting, but stem from the very nature of social life. In Chukchi, the impact of social structure on language is extremely visible following the onset of language shift. As Chukchi has gone from being used primarily among small, tightly-knit communities organized around a shared goal—herding and tending reindeer—towards being a minority language in an increasingly global world, used primarily for symbolic reasons, the structure of the language has unsurprisingly changed to fit its new domain. For Chukchi speakers who can still recall when the language was used for broader communication, such changes are unwelcome or even unacceptable, and the overall sentiment is one of lamenting the loss of the language. Nevertheless, the case of Chukchi can also be seen as an example of a language's continued adaptability in the face of language shift: despite facing staunch competition from dominant languages such as Russian and English, the presence of the Chukchi language and culture

continues to be felt throughout Chukotka and interested learners continue to engage with the language on

their own terms.

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