

Small-scale Multilingualism in Northeastern Siberia

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Multilingualism as diglossia

- Clear division of standard vs. vernacular
 - Structured social spheres where the language is used (domain specification)
 - Difference in prestige based on official literacy standards for the high varieties
 - Absence of (prestigious) writing cultures for the low varieties
- [Fergueson 1959], [Fishman 1967] and a review in [Lüpke 2016]

Small-scale multilingualism

- Not governed by domain specialization
- Not influenced by state-governed language management
- Usually involves dense interaction within a meaningful geographic setting
- Involves indigenous languages with small numbers of speakers
- Is argued to be “the primal human condition” (Evans 2013)
- Language ideologies regulate multilingual practices
- No hierarchical relationships of the languages “motivated by power relations or prestige accorded to particular codes” (Lüpke 2016: 46-47)

Nicholas Evans and his theory of language evolution in multilingual settings

- Languages are technologies (shifters, word classes, grammatical categories etc)
- No single, isolated population had the resources to develop technologies used for contemporary living, language among them
- Different genetic or cultural biases can make the emergence of particular structures or functions more likely in some groups than others
- Instead of mono- or plogenesis - multiple but partial emergence of the suite of features we now regard as language.
- Multilinguals are the natural agents of horizontal transfer across languages.
- As the result, language was a *cumulative, multi-sourced, socially distributed cultural invention*

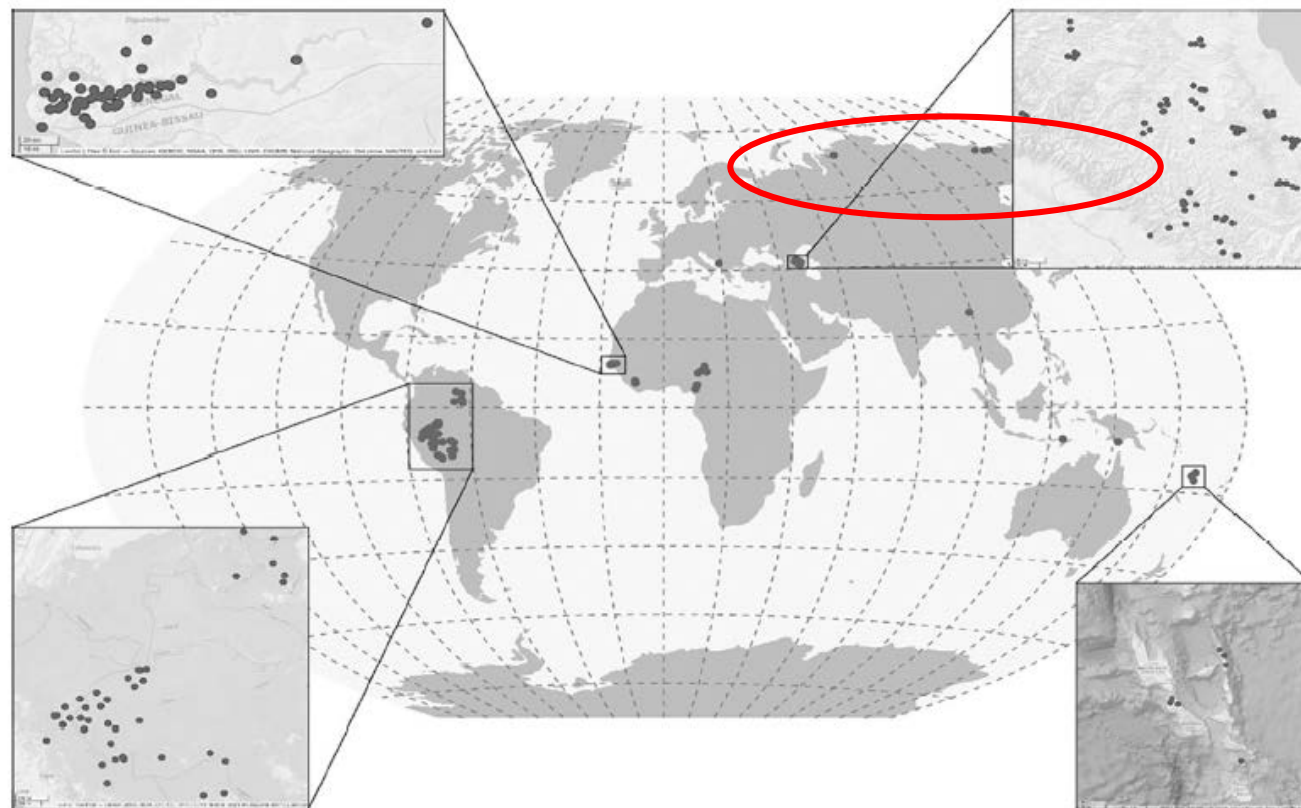
Multilingualism studies and their implications

- Friederike Lüpke regarded small-scale/egalitarian multilingualism as having strong explanatory force for language contact
- Evans proposed that multilinguals transferred features (tools) across languages (technologies), which plausibly explains areal resemblance of languages
- Pakendorf, Dobrushina, Khanina 2021 (IJL 25 (4) Special issue: Typology of Small-Scale Multilingualism)

More accent on descriptive value of small-scale studies, attention to language ideologies. 'Small-scale multilingual communities **are hardly ever perfectly egalitarian**' and show different power relations between languages (p. 849)

Multilingualism studies: what can Arctic regions tell us

- Locations of case studies discussed in IJB 25 (4) Special issue: Typology of Small-Scale Multilingualism



Multilingualism studies: what can Arctic regions tell us

Typical sites of small-scale societies in which multilingualism is reported

- Africa (many sites)
- Amazonia (Vaupes and other)
- Australia (many sites)
- Vanuatu
- Daghestan
- Indonesia

- Usually in these sites there are 2 or more related languages
- Living in settlements
- Extensive contacts through not very long distances
- No reported differences in **economies/technologies**

Languages of Northeastern multilingual areas

Lower Kolyma area

- Even (Tungusic)
- Tundra Yukaghir (Yukaghir)
- Chukchi (Chukotko-Kamchatkan)
- Yakut (Turkic)
- Russian (Indo-European)

Chukchi peninsula area

- Naukan Yupik (Eskaleut)
- Chaplinski Yupik (Eskaleut)
- Chukchi (Chukotko-Kamchatkan)
- English (Hawaiian pidgin)
- Russian (Indo-European)

Variability in technologies and economic conditions

- Transport reindeer herding (Tundra Yukaghir +Even)
- Large-scale reindeer herding (Chukchi)
- Fishing (Local Russians)
- Cattle and horse breeding (Yakut)
- Marine animal hunting (Yupik and coastal Chukchi)

Variability in technologies and economic conditions

- Transport reindeer herding
 - Herds of 5-100 reindeer (Tundra Yukaghir) and 50-300 reindeer (Evens)
 - Should be combined with hunting
 - Does not give stable food supplies
 - Can be practiced in small family groups (4-5 people)



Variability in technologies and economic conditions

- Large-scale reindeer herding
 - Herds of 500-3000 reindeer
 - Permanent meat supplies
 - Permanent source of skins to prepare clothes and dwelling
 - Less importance of hunting, fishing, root gathering etc.
 - Needs to be practiced in big groups (sometimes other Tundra Yukaghirs and Evens were hired as workers)



Variability in technologies and economic conditions

- Fishing (local Russians)
 - No stable food supplies
 - Involves moving from one seasonal fishing place to another
 - Has to be combined with hunting
 - Poverty, starvations and dependence on the governmental help



Variability in technologies and economic conditions

- Cattle and horse breeding (Yakut northern groups)
 - Healthy milk products
 - Horse hair used to make fishing nets – a valuable product in the region with rich fish resources
 - Some stable meat supplies
 - In the north, the herds were very small and it was necessary to practice fishing, too



Variability in technologies and economic conditions

- Marine animal hunting (Yupik)
 - Dogs used for transport
 - No stable food supplies, starvations during off-season periods
 - Several families or more living together to form a hunting team
 - Sharing the gained animals among all villagers
 - High dependence on root and berry gathering



Variability in technologies and economic conditions

- Transport reindeer herding + fishing (TY+Even)
- Large-scale reindeer herding (Chukchi)
- Fishing (Local Russians)
- Cattle and horse breeding+ fishing (Yakut northern groups)
- Marine animal hunting (Yupiks and coastal Chukchis)

Variability in technologies and economic conditions

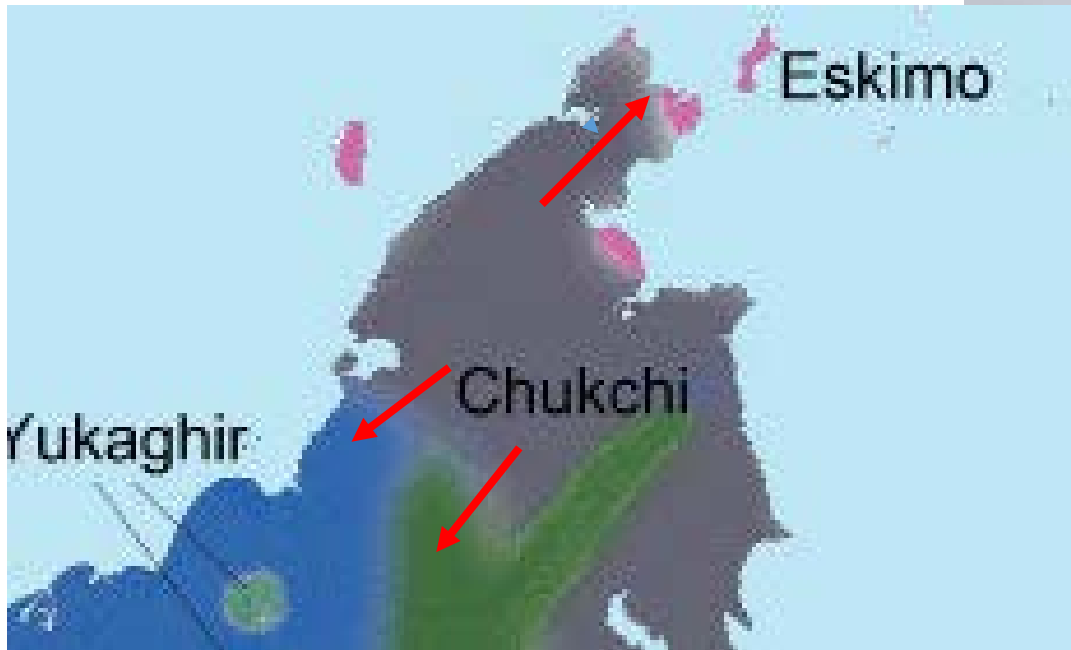
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- -> domination based on technological privileges

Technology spread: Chukchi in the east and west

- Chukchi dwelling type was borrowed by neighboring groups



Technology spread: Chukchi in the west

- Chukchi sledge type was borrowed by Evens and Yukaghirs
- As long as Chukchi kukhl'anka (coat)



Yukaghirs/Evens speaking Chukchi

- In the LK area, Chukchi\Even and Chukchi\Yukaghir bilingualism before 1920s was attested only among Yukaghirs and Evens who **worked for them and those who conducted trade** (usually men in a certain age) – domain specification
- No evidence of code-mixing/switching
- In 20th century: more mixed marriages, more Tundra Yukaghir/Even people acquiring Chukchi from childhood
- Generally positive attitudes towards multilingualism
- No considerable convergence in Chukchi → Tundra Yukaghir, Chukchi → Even directions

Technology spread: Chukchi in the east

- A lot of common elements in the culture of Yupiks and coastal Chukchis
- Shared economy type
- Similar traditions, clothes, beliefs



Yupiks speaking Chukchi

- In Chukchi Peninsula, Chukchi\Yupik bilingualism was more common among the whole Yupik population, though more often among adults who conducted exchanges
- Only 2 sites known where extensive bilingualism was practiced since childhood
- However, extensive bilingualism is not always observed via interviews: 'Only my father who had exchanges spoke Chukchi. My mother also conducted exchanges but did not speak well'. Receptive bilingualism?
- Negative language attitudes of some Chaplino Yupiks towards Chukchi language (at least multilingualism is not honored and respected)
- Classical influence of a more powerful language in Chukchi → Yupik direction: a lot of discourse markers, particles, conjunctions
- Proper names of people adopted in Chukchi → Yupik direction (50% in smaller Chaplino Yupik tribes, see Panova to appear)
- Archeologists (e.g. Dikov) supposing that coastal Chukchi are Yupiks who switched to Chukchi

Technology spread: Yakut?

- Fishing nets made of horsehair – exchange product
- Milk products – exchange product
- Horse breeding and horse riding in some Yukaghir and Even clans (more extensive in the Soviet times)



Yakut/Even+Tundra Yukaghir bilingualism

- In the past - no reported multilingualism since childhood (registered in the interviews of the last speakers)
- Gradual shift of Yukaghirs to Even and to Yakut reported by Iokhelson (but we don't know how it happened)
- Classical influence of a more powerful language in Yakut → Tundra Yukaghir and Yakut → Even direction: borrowing of discourse markers, adverbs etc.
- Other borrowings (nouns, verbs etc, in total not less than 60 in TY)
- Morphological borrowing (not extensive)
- Code –switching and code-mixing occurring at present here and there (a lot of Even families claiming that they speak Even speaking in reality a Yakut-Even mixture)

Tundra Yukaghir /Even bilingualism

- Very similar economy types
- Classic small-scale (nearly egalitarian) type
- Similar economies (Transport reindeer herding)
- Mixed clan names
- Mixed beliefs and traditions in some local groups (but not in all of them)
- Though hard to describe concrete practices due to their remoteness in time (now the situation has changed considerably)
- Linguistic convergence (but not too extensive – see Nikolaeva, Matic to appear)

Spread of languages and technologies: who moves faster?

Chukchi → Tundra Yukaghir, Chukchi → Even

- In the East → West direction, economy & technology of Chukchi origin is spreading faster than language: Chukchi dwelling type, clothes and sledge moving faster than Chukchi language itself
- In the West → East direction the language seem to move faster than economy type, probably due to the ways of emergence and migration of original Chukch/Chukchi-Koryak groups
- Yakut → Tundra Yukaghir and Even: technologies are not extensively borrowed, their products are obtained through exchanges. Cultural and economic merge of Yakuts with Evens and Yukaghirs in the North with the dominance of Yakut language
- Areal features as linguistic technologies

Small-scale multilingualism in Northeastern Siberia: very asymmetric due to economical/technological inequalities

Non-balanced hierarchy relations between the groups and languages due to economic reasons:

- Asymmetric Chukchi/Even and Chukchi/Tundra Yukaghir multilingualism. Chukchi used at work and for exchanges, usually by men (which did not lead to language shift)
- Asymmetric Yakut/Even and Yakut/Tundra Yukaghir multilingualism: Yakut used for exchanges and for communication with neighbours. Gradual shift observed
- Asymmetric Chukchi/Yupik (Chaplino and Naukan) multilingualism: Chukchi used for exchanges. Cases of receptive multilingualism.

Small-scale multilingualism can be also regulated by power relationship, can also have kind of domains (labor groups and gender specialization)

The situation changed after the Soviet rule: Lower Kolyma

- What really changed the situation dramatically was introducing of writing system (which is also a technology) and creating new domains where it was crucial to use it
- In the Lower Kolyma area, there emerged a peculiar ephemeral multilingual community with plenty of mixed marriages and boarding school dorms as domains for language acquisition
- As the result, during 1940-1990s Yukaghirs and Evens started acquiring Chukchi more actively, Chukchi and Yakuts also acquired passively some Even, Yukaghir.
- Everybody started speaking and writing first Yakut and then Russian which led to inevitable language shift

The situation changed after the Soviet rule: Chukchi peninsula

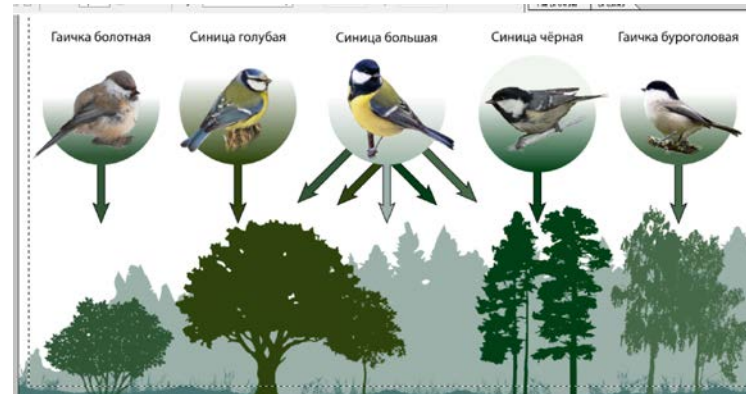
- Yupik transitions (Krupnik 2013): many Yupiks were relocated to Chukchi settlements and were sometimes not welcomed by them
- In some cases, Chukchi\Yupik bilingualism in school, but not too extensive and valued
- As the result, practically no Chukchi\Yupik bilingualism today.

Implications about indigenous multilingualism in general

- During the observation period, in the Norhteast of Russia, only two languages existed in a more or less egalitarian way: Tundra Yukaghir and Even
- It seems that for communities (not only in the Arctic) it is difficult to speak a lot of languages in the perfectly egalitarian way: very high cognitive pressure?
- At least it happens in the communities where very different languages are spoken

Conclusions and suggestions

- As in many cases languages are transferred from parents to children, they have some kind of biological nature as well
- Languages can be regarded as species (as it originally was done to create language family trees)
- Speech communities (number of people in a given locality speaking a certain language) can be regarded as ecological niches for them
- In ecology, a **niche** is the match of a species to a specific environmental condition.



Conclusions and suggestions

- Because of limited amount of resources in the ecosystem, 1 species = 1 one ecological niche
- When 2 or more species turn to occupy the same niche in the ecosystem, they compete, evolve (change) or dye out (compare language shift).
- It happens more often that related species coexist in one niche; usually it is the example of specification process. Language evolution (change) is also easier among the related/similarly structured languages
- But maybe we need a new theory/metaphor which would combine technological and biological nature of language use and transmission?

References

- (In progress: for references, ask me in person)

Thank you for your attention!

