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INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES OF THE NORTH, SIBERIA AND THE FAR EAST: CURRENT STATUS AND DEVELOPMENT PROSPECTS

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Abstract. The study was carried out with the focus on the current issues of sociolinguistics related to the search for ways to preserve the languages of small peoples. The article systematizes data on the state of the languages of the indigenous peoples of the Russian Federation living in the North, Siberia and the Far East, presented in modern publications of historians and linguists, and the documents that reflect the results of the 2010 population census of the Russian Federation, considers the influence of sociolinguistic factors on the language situation in these territories. Having analyzed the world experience of legal language legislation on preserving the cultures and languages of small peoples, the authors attempted to apply some global criteria to the Russian legislation and socio-economic practice and identified socially significant criteria for establishing the language situation in relation to the languages of the indigenous peoples of the Russian Federation living in the North, Siberia and the Far East: the total number of speakers of the language, the use of the language in the education system, the availability of educational and methodological materials for teaching, the factor of inter-generational transmission of a language, the attitudes to the functional benefits from practicing the language among its native speakers. By compiling a methodology for categorizing the language survival type five prototypes of the language state were identified on the basis of statistical data: safe; relatively safe; endangered; critically endangered; close to extinction or dead languages. The authors offered a set of extralinguistic criteria for obtaining objective data on the state of the language and made a supposition that despite the evidence that the languages of the indigenous small-numbered northern peoples of the Russian Federation, with rare exceptions, are on the verge of extinction, significant efforts are being made by the government of the country and the indigenous northern peoples themselves to preserve these languages.

Key words: language situation, language legislation, sociolinguistic analysis, small indigenous peoples of the Russian Federation, state of language, communication sphere.

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ЯЗЫКИ КОРЕННЫХ МАЛОЧИСЛЕННЫХ НАРОДОВ СЕВЕРА, СИБИРИ И ДАЛЬНЕГО ВОСТОКА: СОВРЕМЕННОЕ СОСТОЯНИЕ И ПЕРСПЕКТИВЫ РАЗВИТИЯ

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Аннотация. Исследование выполнено в русле актуальных проблем социолингвистики, связанных с поиском путей сохранения языков малых народов. В статье систематизированы данные о функционировании языков коренных малочисленных народов Российской Федерации, проживающих на Севере, в Сибири и на Дальнем Востоке, представленные в современных публикациях историков, лингвистов и документах, отражающих результаты переписи населения Российской Федерации 2010 года. Охарактеризованы социолингвистические факторы, влияющие на языковую ситуацию, сложившуюся на этих территориях. С учетом мирового опыта юридического регулирования вопроса о сохранении культур и языков малых народов рассмотрены возможности применения в российском законодательстве и социально-экономической практике некоторых общемировых достижений. Предложены социально значимые критерии для установления характера языковой ситуации на территории распространения исследуемых языков: общее количество говорящих на языке, использование языка в системе образования, наличие учебно-методических материалов для обучения, фактор передачи языка молодым поколениям, отношение к функциональной пользе использования языка его носителями. С опорой на статистические данные авторами выделено 5 категориальных типов языков: живой; относительно живой; с неявными признаками исчезновения; с явными признаками исчезновения; на грани исчезновения или исчезнувший. Выявлены экстралингвистические критерии получения объективных данных о состоянии языка. Показано, что, хотя языки коренных малочисленных северных народов Российской Федерации, за редким исключением, находятся на грани исчезновения, правительством страны и самими коренными северными народами предпринимаются значимые усилия по сохранению этих языков. *Вклад авторов:* В.А. Кожемякина осуществила сбор материала по второй и четвертой группам языков, разработала методiku категоризации типов языков; Т.И. Ретинская осуществила сбор материала по первой и третьей группам языков и подготовила обзор международной политики по спасению языков коренных малочисленных народов; С.В. Кириленко анализировала языки пятой группы и представила обзор законодательных источников по теме.

Ключевые слова: языковая ситуация, языковое законодательство, социолингвистический анализ, малочисленные коренные народы Российской Федерации, функционирование языка, сфера коммуникации.

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Introduction

In most multinational countries concerns have been raised over the vitality of the languages of small peoples. Language planning organizations and agencies have called for the measures that can promote these language varieties, contribute to their preservation. The threat of disappearance of minority languages is associated not only with ultimately unfavorable conditions of language existence or the policy of assimilation pursued by the government, but it is also connected with the influence of the trend of globalization. As a rule, minority languages perform drastically few social functions. Such languages are hardly ever heard in the institutional spheres of public interaction

(public administration, international activity, science, higher education, etc.).

In modern societies there has been a definite trend for following a uniform standard. Consequently, the speakers of these minority languages tend to partially or completely avoid speaking their ethnic languages. Moreover, mass media and a unified education system contribute to those globalization processes. Television, radio, print media actively use the languages of interethnic communication. Compulsory school education is normally performed in the state language of the country. That normally displaces native languages from the sphere of family communication.

At present, it might be stated that the disappearance of languages has the extent close

to a cultural disaster. Thousands of languages are in danger of possible extinction. Scientists predict that 90% of languages will vanish in the 21st century, most of which are indigenous languages [Chudinov, 2005].

In modern international documents it is noted that the indigenous peoples of the world, who make up less than 5% of the world's population, have managed to save 20% of the most natural land areas for humanity thanks to their methods of using natural resources. Indigenous peoples are understood as "ethnic groups, originally living in the territory of traditional settlement" (Konventsiya o korennykh narodakh...). The territories where indigenous peoples settle have a special natural and historical and cultural value. As a matter of fact, the population of these territories historically retains the established long-term ecologically-balanced methods of environmental development [Klokov, 1997].

The purpose of this study is to determine and describe the current language status and the language situation of the indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation (hereinafter – the small peoples of the North). The objective here is to specify the particularities of the language situation of their native languages.

Since almost all minor languages are currently close to or in the process of extinction, they are the object of detailed study by linguists nowadays. Many scientists have been studying the state of these languages on the basis of the data from field studies. In our country, these materials can be found in the works of Aleksander E. Kibrik, Andrey A. Kibrik, Valeriy A. Tishkov, Nikolai B. Vakhtin, Evgeniy V. Golovko, Olga A. Kazakevich and many other scientists. Nonetheless, valuable are the descriptions of these languages, made by their native speakers.

Our proposed overview of the current language status and functioning of the languages of the small peoples of the North allows us to gain insights into all the ins and outs of the present-day language situation. The language situation is understood as the combination of varieties of one language or a set of languages in their regional and social relationship and functional interaction within the boundaries of certain geographical regions or administrative-political units.

Material and methods

Before considering in detail the sociolinguistic situation of the small peoples of the North, it is necessary to specify some terms and notions employed in the paper. Indigenous peoples of the Russian Federation are peoples numbering less than 50 000 people living in the territories of traditional settlement of their ancestors, the ones who managed to preserve their traditional way of life, farming, crafts and are aware of themselves as independent ethnic communities (Mikhailchenko (ed.), 2006, p. 98). We see that this term includes several aspects: ethnic, demographic, geographical, cultural and social. The concept of 'indigenous small people' differs from the concept of 'national (ethnic) minority', which is a group of people of one or another ethnic (national) attribute, significantly inferior in number to the surrounding non-ethnic population in the area of its main settlement and different from the rest part of the population in ethno-cultural terms (Mikhailchenko (ed.), 2006, p. 142).

By far, the number of indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East who live in the Russian Federation is calculated as approximately forty peoples. The total number of speakers among the small peoples of the North estimates around 250 thousand people, i.e., only 0.2% of the population of the territories in which they live. At the same time, the territory of their habitat is large in size (about 7 million sq.km): these peoples dispersedly live in compact groups in the territories of their ancestors' historical settlement, which make up at least 50% of the entire territory of the Russian Federation. The indigenous peoples of the North of Russia are traditionally nomadic, semi-nomadic and rural dwellers (about 75% of the population lives in rural areas) [Klokov, Khrushchev, 2004; Korennyye malochislennye narody Severa..., 2003].

In fact, to analyze the linguistic situation of the small peoples of the North, we relied on the data of the All-Russian Population Census of 2010, data from documentary sources: descriptions of individual languages, facts from the history of these peoples. Besides, we studied several reports on functioning the languages of the small peoples of the North in the works of scientists. The classification of languages proposed by us according to their viability was calculated

according to several criteria: the number of speakers, the functioning of the native language in education, the availability of educational materials, the inter-generational transmission of a language, and the attitudes towards the native language within the language community. The languages were then classified into five categories: 1) safe, 2) relatively safe, 3) endangered, 4) critically endangered, 5) close to extinction or death languages. Descriptive and comparative methods were applied. The performed analysis of the linguistic situation of the indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation made it possible to reveal a general picture of the state of the languages of these peoples.

Results and discussion

The long history of the peoples of the North as part of the Russian Empire is subject to separate research. In this paper, we have to confine ourselves to the events in the life of these peoples that took place in the 20th and 21st centuries. It should be noted that most of the northern aboriginal peoples of Russia at the beginning of the last century retained their traditional nomadic and semi-nomadic way of life [Korennyye malochislennyye narody Rossii..., 2000; Kurikov, 1996].

Notably, the concept of non-capitalist development was placed at the basis of the policy of the Soviet state, which was enforced over the peoples of the North. A special administrative body, with the name the Committee of the North was established at those times. Apart from economic aid and significant social benefits, strong actions were taken to improve medicine in these regions, to combat hunger, epidemics. At the same time special government bodies started work on improving language status of the languages spoken there. Linguists worked on building a system of writing symbols, which was later implemented in educational process with the most languages [Alpatov, 2000]. Spelling books and supplementary instruction materials provided the opportunity for teaching the native languages of the peoples. Furthermore, there appeared newspapers and books in native indigenous languages, national theaters started their work. However, throughout these years, serious mistakes were made, which resulted in the mass transfer of the nomadic population to a settled way of life. A radical break

in the economic and domestic way of life was registered. The traditional system of child rearing was violated. Individual farms and collective farms were transferred into state farms. Indigenous peoples were made to relocate to larger settlements. At those times any manifestation of national self-consciousness was considered a manifestation of nationalism. The whole way of their traditional life was totally revamped, and since they were few in numbers, the peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East could not resist these changes. Because of that total restructuring, national-cultural, social, environmental problems started to arise quite rapidly (see: (Assotsiatsiya korennykh...); [Murashko, 2013]).

The transition of the country to market economy led to great deterioration, a deep crisis in reindeer husbandry and traditional crafts like hunting and fishing was noted. Consequently, there was a catastrophic decline in the standard of living, an increase in unemployment, and a several-fold decrease in the real incomes of national households. As a result, the migration processes began [Averin, 2005; Malyye yazyki i traditsii..., 2005].

At the present moment, the state of the natural environment in the areas of settlement of the peoples of the North can be characterized as critical. The development of the oil, gas, mining, logging industry leads to shrinking the territories used by the northern indigenous peoples. As a result, all that causes the reduction in the traditional economic activities of the indigenous peoples. The hereditary lifestyle patterns that used to provide the pivotal basis for the economy, the patterns that constituted the basis of the livelihood of the indigenous population, have been seriously destroyed. The demographic indicators of recent years show a steady downward trend in the growth of the population number of indigenous Siberian peoples (Assotsiatsiya korennykh...).

At the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, three federal laws were adopted in Russia: “On Guarantees of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples of the Russian Federation” (Yazyki narodov Rossii..., 2002, pp. 361-371), “On General Principles for Organizing Communities of Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation” (Yazyki narodov Rossii..., 2002, pp. 349-360) and “On Territories of

Traditional Nature Use” (Federalnyy zakon «O territoriyakh...»). The adoption of these laws enabled the trust in improvement in the life of the small peoples of the North of Russia. Several programs of economic development were adopted, but they were basically declarative and practically did not contain any feasible improvements for real reconstruction of the economic base of traditional crafts. If to consider the safeguarding measures that might possibly protect the indigenous peoples, it should be noted, that it depends on the possibility to be engaged in traditional economic activities, for the small peoples of the North it remains the traditional crafts: reindeer herding, hunting and fishing.

Abrupt alterations in the social and economic state are mirrored in the state of ethnic languages, in particular, it is an issue of preserving languages of the indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East. By far, the cultural and linguistic diversity of the northern peoples is truly unique. Two hundred and fifty thousand people managed to maintain and safeguard the ethnic and local heritage of about 200 varieties. It is important to point out that each of the 40 languages of the peoples of the North has several local dialects and vernaculars. A good illustration here will be the language of the Chukchi. Residing closely and densely, these peoples preserve five varieties of their language. Another example can be found in the language of the Evenki, who live dispersedly in 11 entities of the Russian Federation and their language had three varieties (or variety groups) with 14 dialects, which constitute altogether about 50 local dialects [Pismennyye yazyki..., 2003; Vakhtin, 2001].

Up until the 20th, virtually all the languages of the indigenous small peoples of the North were unwritten in Russia. However, about thirty languages developed their own writing systems in the 20th century. Most of them are either youngly-written languages or newly-written languages, which gained their written symbols in early 20th century or in the 1990s, correspondingly. Only ten languages remain in the status of unwritten up to now.

The analysis of the language situation showed that the degree of vitality of a language does not fully depend on the number of speakers of this language. The demographic power of a variety, while being not the only

indicator of the vitality of a language, is nonetheless an important factor in determining its maintenance status. A more important indicator is the functional power of the idiom, which is determined by the number of communicative spheres served by this idiom in relation to the total number of such spheres (Mikhailchenko (ed.), 2006, p. 236).

The ability of a language to preserve and further develop (the vitality of a language) depends on a number of social factors: 1) the number of native speakers; 2) the method of resettlement of native speakers; 3) presence of writing system; 4) the traditions of using the language in different areas of communication; 5) the degree of development of national-linguistic self-awareness among native speakers; 6) the presence of a social need for the use of the native language, the use of other languages in various areas of communication (bilingualism or multilingualism) [Solntsev, Mikhailchenko, 1994, p. 11].

Let us consider the population figures of the small peoples of the North, as well as the number of those who speak their own ethnic language (see Table).

According to the state of vitality, all these languages can be classified into five groups.

The first group includes only two languages. Only these two have a clear chance of survival and further development. These languages are: 1) the *Nenets language* (44,035 peoples of this nation); total Nenets people who speak their native language are 49.8% of the total number of people; 2) the *Chukchi language* with 15,331 Chukchi, of which 33.2% of people speak Chukchi language. Traditionally, the division of the Nenets language into tundra and forest varieties is accepted, however, the tundra variety is mostly used in written form and has many more speakers. The language situation in the first group is the least alarming. So, for example, the Nenets language is quite viable in many respects, as the Nenets people have remained committed to traditional reindeer herding up until today. Therefore, many of them almost constantly live in camps or regularly go to pastures and spend a significant part of the year there. As for the permanent residents of the settlements, they completely opt for speaking in Russian language at an alarming pace.

Population of the indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation who speak their native languages according to the 2010 All-Russian population census

Language	Number of people	Ethnic language speakers	Language	Number of people	Ethnic language speakers
Aleutsky	401	45	Soyot	3579	–
Alyutorsky	–	25	Tazsky	253	–
Vepsian	5486	3613	Telengit	3648	–
Dolgansky	7716	1054	Teleut	2520	975
Itelmensky	3007	82	Tofalar	678	93
Kamchadalsky	1831	–	Tubalarsky	1851	229
Kereksky	4	10	Tuvan-Todzhans	1856	–
Ket	1098	213	Udege	1413	103
Koryaksky	7809	1665	Ulchi	2621	154
Kumandy	2688	738	Khanty	30181	9584
Mansiysk	11873	938	Chelkansky	1113	310
Nanai	11540	1347	Chuvansky	854	–
Nganasan	807	125	Chukotsky	15331	5095
Negidal	480	74	Chulymsky	349	44
Nenets	44035	21926	Shorsky	12188	2802
Nivkh	4439	198	Evenki	37116	4802
Oroksky	259	47	Even	22098	5656
Orochsky	441	8	Enets	221	43
Sami	1599	353	Eskimo	1543	508
Selkup	3527	1023	Yukagir	1550	370

Note. Source: [Vserossiyskaya perepis...].

The languages of the second group currently may be unlikely referred to the category of being in danger of extinction (according to different scientific estimates). These are the varieties of large developed languages. Although in modern conditions and under the influence of unified school education, dialect differences are leveled, nevertheless, as world experience shows, the use of dialect forms of the language is preserved in family communication and in single-national production communities engaged in traditional ways of life.

Languages: *Telengit* (3648 people), *Teleut* (2520 people), *Chelkan* (1113 people), *Tubalar* (1891 people) are varieties of the Altai language. The *Tuvan-Todzhans* (1856 people) is a variety of the Tuvan language. The *Kamchadal* language (1831 people) is a variety of the Northern Russian dialect, which has experienced a long-term influence of the languages the indigenous population (Itelmens and Koryaks), and the *Taz* language (253 people) is one of the dialects of the northern variety of Chinese language. The language situation among the Tuvans-Todzhans can be assessed as one of the most promising

among other small ethnic groups in the Siberian region. Despite the fact that the Todzha variety, like other varieties, is under active pressure from the literary language, the norms of which penetrate through the school, the media, and fiction, the stability of traditional forms of economic management in the region contributes to the preservation of dialect features in the Todzhinsky district of the Republic of Tyva. Communication in the language is present in a familiar business environment, i.e., the breeding of deer and livestock, hunting for fur-bearing animals, fishing. It is important that young people also actively participate in such labor activities.

The languages of the third group are highly likely endangered. These languages are: *Evenki* (37,116 people, of which only 12.9% speak their native language), *Khanty* (30,181 people, of which 31.7% speak their native language), *Even* (22,098 people, Even speaking – 25.5%), *Shor* (a language with a renewed written tradition) (12,188 people, of which 23.3% speak their native language), *Nanai* (11,540 people, 11.6% speak the language), *Mansi* (11,873 people, 11.3% speak their native language), *Veps* (a language with a renewed

written tradition) (5,486 people, 3,613 people (65.8%) speak their native language), *Nganasan* (newly-written) (807 people, 15.5% of them speak their native language), *Dolgan* (newly-written) (7,716 people, 13.6% speak their native language). As follows from the data, the number of people who use them is gradually getting smaller; this may be accounted to the sociolinguistic situation. Traditional crafts (reindeer herding, hunting and fishing) remain the most natural environment for the use of these languages, but the volume of their use in the family and household sphere, which is most important for the functioning of the language, has greatly decreased. Only older people use their native languages in everyday communication. Young people who are passive speakers of their native languages, do not want to learn and speak their native language. These languages, albeit very limitedly, function in state-regulated communicative areas, such as school education (no instruction provided in these languages, they are studied only as a subject). Simultaneously, the field of mass communication has sporadic language activity (periodicals, radio broadcasting, television broadcasting), the field of fiction, the field of educational and educational literature. Nevertheless, the prospects for the development and preservation of these languages do not give much ground for optimism, as adverse changes are observed, i.e., a decrease in the use of these languages in oral and written forms, a decrease in the level of command of these languages among speakers of their peoples and their loss of interest in oral communication and writing in their native language.

The most numerous *group of languages – the fourth* – are the languages that are on the verge of extinction. It includes eleven languages - *Koryak* (youngly-written) (8709 people, 21.3% speak their native language), *Nivkh* (youngly-written) (4439 people, 4.5% know their native language), *Selkup* (youngly-written) (3527 people, 29% speak their native language), *Itelmen* (a language with a renewed written tradition) (3007 people, 2.7% speak their native language), *Ulch* (newly-written) (2621 people, 5.8% speak their native language), *Sami* (language with a renewed written tradition) (1599 people, 22% speak their native language), *the language of Asian Eskimos* (newly-written) (1543 people, 32.9% speak their native language), *Yukagir*

(newly-written) (1550 people, 23.8% speak their native language), *Ket* (newly-written) 1098 people, 19.4% speak their native language), *Tofalar* (newly-written) (678 people, 13.7% speak their native language), *Enets* (newly-written) (221 people), 19.4% speak their native language, but this is only 43 people out of 221 of the people). Half of these languages are newly-written, that is, their graphic registration has been done recently, and therefore they have an insufficient level of standardization and functional development. These languages are used in interpersonal communication, mainly in the family and household sphere (as a rule, among the older generation). They are losing ground in most important sphere for the existence of the language, because the natural intergenerational transmission of the language to children within the family ceases. Certain efforts are being made at the state level to organize the teaching of these languages at school, to publish educational and educational-methodical literature, folklore works, but they turn out to be ineffective, because most children come to school without knowing the ethnic language, most young people speak only Russian. The language situation in this group can be called catastrophic.

Undoubtedly, the survival of a language depends not only on state support and funding, but also to a large extent on the interest of the speakers of the ethnic group in preserving their native language, which, unfortunately, is not the case among the native speakers of these languages. These languages are endangered and there is little hope that they will still be spoken in a few decades. In such an unfortunate situation, it is vital to perform the most complete fixation of the still preserved linguistic and folklore material.

The fifth group of languages contains practically dead languages. They are all unwritten, except for *Udege language* (1413 people, 7.3% speak their native language), *Oroksky* (259 people, 18% speak their native language), *Orochsky* (441 people, 1.8% speak their native language), *Chulym* (349 people, 12.6% speak their native language), *Kerek* (4 people, and 10 speak the language), *Alyutor* (25 people speak it), *Soyot* (3579 people). Although until recently *Soyot* was considered extinct, in 2001, a script based on the Cyrillic alphabet was developed for the Soyot language. All these languages have reached the final stage of their existence. The speakers of

these languages are mainly elderly people. The middle generation understands their mother tongue but does not speak it. Children do not know the language of their nationality at all. It should be admitted that the current state of these languages makes it possible to classify them as the dead language type.

The analysis of the data available based on several sociolinguistic criteria proved to be an objective measure in defining the survival status of an indigenous language.

Having revealed the general shape of linguistic state of the indigenous peoples' languages under study, we will pass to consideration of measures on protecting linguistic diversity that are offered by international authorities and compare them to the language policy pursued in Russia to preserve the languages of the indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation.

To estimate properly the world experience in language legislation on the global level, it is necessary to consider several fundamental documents that were offered for the first steps in regulating chances for indigenous languages' survival. Since the plight of indigenous peoples around the world has attracted worldwide attention, the year of 1993 has been proclaimed by the United Nations as the International Year of the World's Indigenous Peoples. In 1995, the UN declared that the next decade (1995–2004) is the International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples. At the end of the 20th century a number of important international documents on indigenous issues have been adopted. Among them, first of all, the Convention on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples should be noted. It was adopted by the International Labor Organization in the year of 1989 No. 169.

The adoption of this Convention is of great importance for the preservation of the culture and languages of indigenous peoples, since the assimilation approach to indigenous peoples is typical not only for our country, but for the entire world community. The preamble of the Convention notes with regret that "the changes that have taken place in international law since 1957, as well as the changes in the situation of indigenous and tribal peoples in all regions of the globe, necessitate the adoption of new international standards on this issue in

order to eliminate the orientation towards assimilation contained in the previously existing norms" (Konventsiya o korennykh narodakh...). In addition to political, economic and social rights, the Convention recognized the right of indigenous peoples to follow their traditions, the right to preserve their native language and to study in it (Konventsiya o korennykh narodakh...).

The world community consideration of the issue about the danger of minority peoples' languages extinction led in 1992 to the adoption of the European Charter on Regional or Minority Languages by the Council of Europe (Yazyki narodov Rossii..., 2002, pp. 302-348). The Charter obliges the member states of the Council of Europe, as well as the states wishing to join the Council of Europe, to observe the language rights of national minorities proclaimed in the Charter. The Russian Federation ratified this Charter, in connection with which a large scientific and organizational work was continued and intensified to support the functioning of the languages of small peoples.

On September 13, 2007, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was adopted by the General Assembly. The UN Declaration was adopted by a majority vote: 143 states voted "for", 4 – "against" (Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the USA) and 11 countries, including the Russian Federation, abstained (United Nations Declaration...).

The Declaration "establishes a universal framework of minimum standards for the survival, dignity, well-being and rights of indigenous peoples around the world" (UNESCO). The Declaration addresses "both individual and collective rights; cultural rights and identity; the right to education, health, employment, language. It prohibits discrimination against indigenous peoples and encourages their full and effective participation in all matters affecting them" (UNESCO). It also "enshrines their right to be different and to determine their own economic, social and cultural priorities" (UNESCO).

According to UNESCO, the world's indigenous languages are in danger of extinction. As many scholars and writers rightly believe, "if a language dies, its people die too" (Mackey, 1992, p. XVIII). In 2016 drawing the attention of the world community to the topic of

maintaining and preserving the world's indigenous languages, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the year of 2019 as the International Year of Indigenous Languages. The coming decade was declared as the decade of indigenous languages (2022–2032) when attention will be focused on the rights of speakers of indigenous languages (UNESCO).

Language legislation for saving the languages of the indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation is domestically implemented in Russia. Thus, “the right to use one’s native language, to freely choose the language of communication, upbringing, education and creativity” (Konstitutsiya RF..., art. 26) is enshrined in the Constitution of the Russian Federation, that was adopted in 1993 and later amended.

In 1998, amendments and additions to the Federal Law “On the languages of the peoples of the RSFSR of 1991” were adopted (Zakon RF «O yazykakh narodov...»). According to this law, the languages of the peoples are a national treasure, historical and cultural heritage and are under state protection (Federalnyy zakon «O territoriakh...») (Introductory part). Article 8 (Chapter III), dedicated to the state protection of national (native) languages, enshrines the right of citizens of the Russian Federation to preserve, develop the national (native) language, freedom of choice and use of the language of communication, education and training as well as the right to receive a basic general education in the national (native) language and the choice of the language of education within the framework of the opportunities provided by the education system in accordance with the legislation of the Russian Federation and the legislation of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation (Federalnyy zakon «O territoriakh...»). A number of articles of the Law guarantee state support to languages of small peoples, assistance in organizing various forms of education and training in their native language, regardless of their number and in accordance with their needs (Federalnyy zakon «O territoriakh...») (Article 9, paragraph 5), and establish conditions for preserving and the development of their languages (Federalnyy zakon «O territoriakh...») (V. 6). Article 10 (Chapter II) affirms the right of every people of the Russian Federation, who do not have

their own written language, to assemble it within the native language (Federalnyy zakon «O territoriakh...»). The state provides the conditions required (Federalnyy zakon «O territoriakh...»). According to this law, the citizens of the Russian Federation who consider themselves to be members of certain ethnic communities have the right to speak and give evidence in their native languages during court proceedings and in law enforcement agencies (Chapter IV, Article 18) (Federalnyy zakon «O territoriakh...»). Having been concerned about the low birth rate and high premature mortality of the small indigenous peoples of the North, the Russian state recently has confirmed its will to correct the errors of the previous assimilation policy towards these peoples and follow international principles and norms.

The 1990s saw a setting of a number of public organizations of the indigenous peoples of the North: the Association of the Indigenous Peoples of the North (1990), the Deputy Assembly of the Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East (1991), the International League of Indigenous Peoples and Ethnic Groups (1991). During this period, declarations were adopted on the need to ratify Convention No. 169, the Decree of the Supreme Council and the Decree of the President of Russia on the organization of territories of traditional nature management and the priority use of their traditional natural resources by the indigenous peoples of the North (1992). Draft laws were created and discussed that provide a mechanism for the implementation of Convention No. 169 in our country.

In 1999, the federal law “On Guarantees of the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples of the Russian Federation” was adopted, which states that people belonging to minorities have the right to: preserve and develop their native languages; receive and disseminate information in native languages, create mass media, etc. (Article 10) (Federalnyy zakon «O garantiyakh prav...»).

In 2000, a unified list of indigenous peoples of the Russian Federation was approved, which currently includes 40 indigenous peoples living in Siberia, the North and the Far East (Yazyki narodov Rossii..., 2002, p. 372).

From the 1950s and to the present, in connection with the policy of Russification of indigenous peoples and the resettlement of

people of other nationalities who came to develop deposits of natural resources in rural areas, the number of indigenous peoples speaking their native language has decreased. As a result, the number of schools, where children were taught their native language, lessens, due to the lack of language prestige in the current situation. Language prestige of minority languages dropped significantly as the sociopsychological evaluation of a language could not correlate either formally or informally with the high status of the domineering language [Larchenko, 2012].

The functions of newly created written languages have been reduced to a minimum. Lately, leading representatives of the indigenous peoples of the North of Russia have initiated a number of projects and the formation of various kinds of regional organizations that contribute to the study and development of the languages of the indigenous peoples. Gradually, for some languages, the number of local schools teaching children their native language is increasing. Young people of the indigenous population have privileges for admission to higher educational institutions in their regions, as well as to the Institute of the Peoples of the North of the Russian State Pedagogical University named after A.I. Herzen in St. Petersburg.

However, as it was already noted, the threat of extinction of the languages of small peoples is associated not only with unfavorable conditions or the policy of assimilation pursued by the state, but also with the process of globalization, which leads speakers of these languages to partial or complete rejection of their ethnic languages.

The analysis of the language situation of the small peoples of the North suggests that the preservation and development of languages will depend on a systematically pursued language policy based on such basic principles as:

- 1) the maintenance and facilitation of the use of the language in family circles;
- 2) conducting measures to enhance the institutional application of a language of any considered community;
- 3) providing education in native languages in local schools;
- 4) expanding the domains of languages use by expanding into new areas of public interaction;
- 5) safeguarding the viability of languages with the help of legislative acts and the Constitution.

Conclusions

The results of the sociolinguistic analysis of the situation of the languages of the indigenous peoples of the North and the Far East of the Russian Federation made it possible to formulate several conclusions.

The procedures of testing the status of an indigenous peoples' language offered in the article turned to be productive in the way of distinguishing a set of socio-linguistic factors that could tell about the linguistic situation in a certain indigenous peoples' community. The analysis of the material available on the languages of the indigenous peoples of the North and the Far East in Russia resulted in developing a language type classification according to the degree of its vitality. Five prototypes of the language status were identified as being safe, relatively-safe, endangered, critically-endangered, close to extinction or death. The first two groups of languages (safe or relatively safe) are the languages that are still practiced in certain areas of communication, thus opening the opportunities for their inter-generational transmission. The third group of languages functions in some limited areas, though they are still stable in family communications. The fourth group is particularly vulnerable. Speakers show stable generational differences in the language use, most young people speak only Russian. Regarding the fifth group, it has to be admitted that they are mostly close to extinction or death.

The analysis of the data of the last census of the population of the Russian Federation showed that the number of speakers of the languages of the northern indigenous peoples is drastically low, especially with some languages out of an average of 40, namely Udege, Chulyum, Alyutor, Soyot, Oroksky, Orochsky, and the Kerek language.

The Russian state is taking legislative measures to preserve the cultural heritage of the indigenous small-numbered northern peoples, but their effect depends on the efforts made by the indigenous peoples themselves, who have recently started to actively participate in the process of preserving and reviving their native languages. It is known that cultural heritage preservation can be achieved only through the joint efforts. In search of a way to revitalize their cultural heritage, they turn to the experience of their

ancestors. In the environment of impoverishment and abandonment, in some villages of the peoples of the North and their communities, elements of the traditional life support system are being spontaneously restored. National, tribal or neighboring fishing associations are settled for procuring provisions of products. Old forms of organizing joint activities, traditional modes of transport are being brought back. Traditional medicine is gaining great importance. Consequently, the sphere of the native language usage is expanding among some peoples. The family and group system of teaching children to traditional types of economic activities, the transfer of traditional knowledge is being re-established, and it can lead to a certain revival of the native languages of indigenous peoples as a means of ethnic-related communication. The task of linguists is to continue documentation of the practice in native languages.

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