

5 LEARNING TOOLS FOR PRESERVING LANGUAGES AND TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE IN KAMCHATKA

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Introduction

When the author first came to Kamchatka in 1993, he was able to build upon fieldwork experience that he had acquired while working in the mid-1980s with First Nations groups on the west coast of Canada.¹ At that time, his anthropological methodology was already entrenched in principles of collaborative community-oriented research – not only for ethical reasons (see Lavrillier, *this volume*), but also for the sake of obtaining fieldwork data that should turn out in the years to come to be of particular quality and more significant value.

First, a chronology of various projects is given here that shows how the focus has continuously shifted and expanded depending on new situations and on the different ethnic groups the team was working with – the Itelmen, Evens and Koryaks of Kamchatka. In a final chapter the lessons that have been learnt from these projects are summarised and discussed, in particular against the background of the most inspiring comments that the author received on these issues during the preceding seminars for this publication project,² for which all participants are warmly thanked.³

Itelmen language and culture

The first project in Kamchatka was on ‘Ethnicity processes among the Itelmen’, and was funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (1993–1996).⁴ Immediately upon his arrival the author was confronted with the pressing situation of Itelmen language loss and the strong concern of the residents of the main Itelmen village of Kovran on the west coast of the peninsula to maintain or revitalise their language.⁵

At a local community meeting in Kovran in 1993, Erich Kasten and his team assistant and local artist Sergei Longinov were urged by local Itelmen language expert and teacher Klavdiia Nikolaevna Khaloimova and others to implement special measures for the preservation of the Itelmen language, although such an initiative was not part of the original research programme. The prime concern of community members was to preserve local speech variants of the Itelmen language and the corresponding specific local knowledge. For native speakers, these elements were not sufficiently reflected in the standardised teaching materials that had been

launched in the 1980s and were used to teach Itelmen in the schools. In most parts of the Soviet Union, similar school materials had been produced since the 1980s to preserve native languages.

One of the problems identified right from the beginning was that Itelmen language education (like native language education in other parts of Kamchatka and presumably in the rest of Russia) was mostly geared towards (and restricted to) the regular school curriculum in terms of topics, content, and methodology. Another problem identified was that the existing teaching materials employed certain standards for the Itelmen language that did not always reflect local language variants still spoken by the older generation. Therefore, many of the elders were critical of these school books. Consequently, the main goal of the project was to preserve the Itelmen language in connection with local culture, i. e. specific natural environments and traditional worldviews, while spatial boundaries among communities were



[10] Distribution of indigenous groups in Kamchatka.

expressed by specific local variants of the Itelmen language. This corresponds to the project team's philosophy that presenting language data in connection with local culture can most effectively stimulate interest and contribute to the preservation of endangered languages.

Project priorities were determined as a result of extensive consultation with local residents. Thus, the project team learned that the preservation (if not full revitalisation) of the Itelmen language or even parts of it would help many people to maintain their particular and local identities, and provide them with broader access to other forms of traditional – e.g. ecological – knowledge. The main strategy of the project has been to produce new language learning tools in addition to complementing existing ones, in which Michael Dürr, an anthropological linguist from Berlin, most actively collaborated. Importantly, these new materials now pick up local contents, i.e. themes and environments that local people can more easily identify with, in order to tie language and cultural learning together, to make language learning more meaningful and thus to increase the learners' personal motivation and investment.

The first product resulting from the project was an Itelmen language-learning textbook with Russian translations (Khaloimova et al. 1997). The book addresses relevant Itelmen cultural themes and refers to local social and natural environments, thus stimulating native language maintenance in combination with preserving the cultural heritage and traditional knowledge and practices of the Itelmen people. The book is set up according to thematic modules taken from daily life in the local communities (e.g. fishing techniques, hunting tools, crafts, traditional song). The thematic sections focus mostly on vocabulary and its use in simple expressions, whereas there are no grammar lessons in this book.

The project team recognised that for the Itelmen language to be passed on to younger generations, language learning would have to start at the youngest possible age. We immediately became aware of the problem that most severely endangered languages usually face – the fact that the native language was no longer the mother tongue or first language of the children. Almost all parents had already lost active native speech competence,⁶ and young children could only listen to some fragments of Itelmen language that some elders occasionally still switched to when they came together. Thus, the new materials produced are particularly geared towards facilitating learning situations where elders (grandparents) can explain their local environment and culture to very young children (even at pre-kindergarten age), with the help of the illustrations and by using Itelmen words contained in the new textbook. Such language learning situations have proved most effective and rewarding for both 'teacher' and 'learner'.

In this way the very young can be provided at least occasionally with a native language environment at this crucial age for language acquisition at home, where otherwise the Itelmen language is no longer being used. The illustrations of local scenes in

the book serve furthermore to trigger memories on the part of the elders who explain these situations to the young. Identification with local content was also seen as a key towards providing incentives and motivation for learning the language and thus for using the book. The illustrations of the textbook relate directly to local culture and traditions; the scenery shown depicts real surrounding locations so that the children become immediately engaged in remembering and identifying them ('... on this street I walk to school every morning ... here I go fishing with my father ...'). This constitutes a significant difference from previous native language textbooks dating from the Soviet era whose illustrations portray such items as astronauts or Red Square.

Local language variation is an important challenge for the production of any language teaching materials. As mentioned above, the existing materials employed certain standards for the Itelmen language that did not always reflect local variants still spoken by the older generation. The new textbook therefore includes several variants of Itelmen language instead of just one 'standardised' version: in addition to the established or 'standardised' variant originally spoken in Sopochnoe (and by project partner K. N. Khaloimova), a second variant is the one spoken in the north in Moroshechnoe, place of origin of one of the most competent remaining native speakers, Georgii 'Gosha' Zaporotskii. Additionally, certain expressions from the particular Kamchadal vernacular were included, reflecting in part words from previous Itelmen varieties.

The textbook was presented to the public in a special ceremony during the *Alkhalalai* festival in Kovran in 1997, in the presence of educators from nearby villages and district centres. Most of the one thousand copies of the textbook were distributed directly from the publisher to school and village administrations within the Kamchatsky *oblast'* and the Tigil'sky *rayon*.

Such methodological approaches and experiences, as well as the need to explore new technological possibilities (Dürr 1998), had been discussed comparatively at a workshop with international scholars and teachers on native languages from various parts of Russia at the Franckesche Stiftungen in Halle in 1997 (Kasten, ed. 1998).

A multimedia CD-ROM followed the textbook publication (Dürr et al. 2001). The project team recognised that in the eyes of the youth electronic learning tools add prestige to the project materials. The youth were particularly targeted in the preservation effort, so these tools made it more attractive for young people to devote energy to the endeavour. It was also recognised that identification with local and well-known Itelmen customs, personalities and traditional activities could be enhanced by enabling students to listen to actual speakers and to watch the activities in video clips.

The CD-ROM is based on the textbook, but in addition it is also aimed at adult user groups, providing information such as scientific terms of local plant and animal species. The CD follows the same thematic structure as the textbook and can be used together with it. On the CD, all vocabulary and sentences in the book can be heard in the form of sound files, and many of them by various speakers. As a new feature, the

listener can now choose from up to eight different variants of the Itelmen language, such as that once spoken in his/her particular ancestral home village, a feature that has become very popular. To provide such a great number of variants of local pronunciations of a certain expression would have been quite confusing in the printed textbook, whereas in the electronic edition of the CD this was easily accomplished. For such reasons, the project team decided to focus mainly on the production of electronic learning tools in the future.

The CD also contains recordings and texts of some Itelmen stories and songs and children's art works, collected for an exhibition project in Germany. This further illustrates the language data in its given contexts; and it provides short video clips on relevant local activities such as dancing and staged ceremonies at the *Alkhalalalai* festival, setting up a fish weir, digging roots in the tundra with a special tool, etc. Besides Russian translations, an English version was added to the CD, as some of the content was considered of interest to other native peoples of the circumpolar North outside Russia and for linguists and other scholars who are not in full command of the Russian language. In particular, this concerns the natural environments and related harvesting/procurement activities, which are very similar all across the circumpolar North.

The official presentation of the CD *Itelmen Language and Culture* took place in 2002 at the Institute for Advanced Teachers' Training in Palana. More than two hundred copies were distributed via the UNESCO Moscow office in Kamchatka, which sponsored the CD's production. A printed version of the CD content is available on the web.⁷

In addition to the above-mentioned jointly produced publications, the project team supported the publication of *Methodical recommendations (materials) for teachers of the Itelmen language* (Khaloimova 1999). This book is directed mainly at future Itelmen teachers and is considered a particularly useful teaching tool at the Institute for Advanced Teachers' Training in Palana. The book is a guide for teachers on how to systematically explain the rather intricate Itelmen grammar to school children of different levels with the help of short examples. This had also been neglected in the textbooks of the 1980s.

Overall, in the data compilation process for the Itelmen project, extensive consultations with local people were carried out to identify and utilise such local content, which they considered important from their own point of view. For example, the topic of toponyms (place names) was given considerable attention, as it was obviously an important issue for local residents to keep memories alive of those places from which they had been relocated against their will into central settlements in the 1960s (it would probably not have been 'politically correct' to include such an issue in school books during the Soviet period).

Furthermore, in the course of the project, Itelmen people (and those who felt their roots to lie in Itelmen culture) who live in the central parts of the Kamchatka penin-

sula (Mil'kovo district, see *map*, p. 66) – they are also known as Kamchadals – and some Itelmen residing in the main capital Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, also started to actively take part in the effort. This led, among other things, to the inclusion of the particular Kamchadal vernacular and vocabulary in the teaching materials produced. The CD eventually also became quite popular in the urban Itelmen community in Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, where it has helped Itelmens to restore and substantiate their revitalised identity by strengthening their native language competence.

Many local residents have voiced their satisfaction to the project team, indicating that the project materials have made a substantial contribution to their lives by increasing interest and helping to preserve the Itelmen language at all levels. This was most evident with the CD, which gave Itelmen activists of the younger or middle generation (those between twenty and fifty years old) the chance to revitalise (parts) of their language. For them it would have been more difficult and outright boring to learn from already existing school books whose methodologies had been designed for school classes and for children between the ages of seven and twelve.

Ten years after its first publication, due to changes in the multimedia link administration of Adobe software, some functions of the *Itelmen language and culture* CD no longer operate as they should and as they did before (unless the original software delivered with the CD is installed). A planned updated new edition that will contain even more video material and in better quality is planned in the DVD series of the Foundation for Siberian Cultures. Some additional material for this edition can be viewed already in the Foundation's 'Show on the web', July 2011.⁸

Since 2010, our team has been continuing its work on Itelmen language and culture as part of the programme of the Foundation for Siberian Cultures. According to an initiative of Tjan Zaotschnaja, it's currently focussing on and supporting Itelmen language classes in Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky and in the Elizova district in Kamchatka.⁹

A number of useful lessons have been learned from our work with Itelmen people and materials since the mid-1990s that could be applied on an even larger scale in subsequent additional projects on Even and Koryak language and culture (see *below*). First, the important use of audio-visual data, as addressed above, in connection with printed learning tools requires continuous adaptation to new and more advanced technical solutions in presenting the material. In the late 1990s we first developed interactive CD editions and eventually switched, in addition to it, to DVD format, which provided us new possibilities at that time. More recently we started to develop additional online versions for at least some of the (video-) materials, that one would not even have thought of 10 years ago, and this probably will be the main trend now in the future (see Kraef, Rießler, *this volume*; although from other seminar participants we learnt that, as in Kamchatka, many communities in the Russian North still lack reliable internet access).

Second, we experienced the particular challenges relating to how to deal with local linguistic variation. This involves the degree to which standards introduced during the Soviet period concerning transcription methods and grammar presentation, to which the younger generation has in the meantime become accustomed, should be revised or modified. Creating new teaching tools that on the one hand contain local or situation-specific language variants and on the other hand remain compatible with standards for grammar and orthography that have been in use for over 20 years (despite differences in original speech patterns of the elder generation), was one of the main challenges faced in the Itelmen project. Later, discrepancies between standardised ‘school book’ language and ‘originally spoken’ language became even more evident in later projects for the preservation of Even and Koryak, where direct transcriptions of the recorded texts reflected how people actually spoke.

This leads to the fundamental question of whether the issue of language preservation might be better served if, in contrast to conventional school books, new learning tools and methodologies could place stronger emphasis on actually performed original oral traditions and their local variants. New audio-visual teaching materials based on recorded texts and local contents are nowadays well-suited to addressing this issue.

Third, experiences of this project made us rethink native language pedagogy. Previous Itelmen language programmes and learning tools pretended that it was the children’s mother tongue or first language, although this was and is no longer the case. If Itelmen is taught at school, realistically, as a second or foreign language (such as English), the question of motivation: ‘what for?’ – requires particular justification, especially when other options such as English classes provide young Itelmen with the prospect of better professional career opportunities. Unless a specific native language pedagogy along with a philosophy and viable approach that indicates the importance of preserving the language is used, the motivation of students is usually low. The insufficient outcomes such as those in the Soviet native language programmes in the 1980s using the school books introduced at that time are a clear example of this. In the Itelmen context, the coupling of cultural knowledge with language acquisition in textbooks was one way in which the project team attempted to counter this effect. To encourage Itelmen language training beyond the regular school curriculum, learning tools have also to be conceptualised in such a way that they address even adults who are concerned about revitalising their Itelmen language competence and identity.

Ideally, culturally oriented teaching materials, in particular those with ecological content, should be used in combination with summer school ecological tours at nature sites outside the village (for example, fishing camps), where people practice traditional harvesting activities and where these can be demonstrated by elders. For Itelmen, a pilot project consisting of ecological tours under the guidance of elders has been designed for the purpose of strengthening knowledge of their contextual

terminology. This was organised by Itelmen educator Nina Tolman in 2000 with the support of the Franckesche Stiftungen in Halle, Germany. Unfortunately, this programme had to be discontinued due to lack of ongoing funding. This approach has been taken up again, however, in later field projects on Koryak language and culture (see *below*).

This initiative also reflects and is much in line with one of Stephan Dudeck's most important findings from projects that he describes for the Khanty in this volume (see p. 142) – that native language and traditional knowledge should rather be transmitted outside the school curriculum, where it falls under the primary socialisation that only parents and other family members can successfully accomplish.

Finally we concluded that video format provides better teaching methodologies and learning tools, as they come closer to the traditional ways of transmitting knowledge and language competence (see *below*). This allows for better and more natural individual identification with the material by the learner.

Because of its positive results, the Itelmen language and culture project was listed in 2008 in the UNESCO 'Register of Good Practices in Language Preservation' (Kasten 2009b).

Even language and culture

In 1999 and 2000, two seminars were held in Esso in Central-Kamchatka where most native residents are Even, a Tungus-speaking people who immigrated at the beginning of the 19th century from their homelands west of the Okhotsk sea over northern Kamchatka into this area (see *map*, p. 66). From these workshops originated additional initiatives to preserve the cultural heritage of that particular Even group. The first of these seminars, held in 1999 and funded by the Haus der Kulturen der Welt (Berlin), was on the theme 'Traditional worldviews of the peoples of Kamchatka'. Its aim was to prepare for the dance theatre 'The travels of the shaman into worlds beyond' by the Even ensemble *Nulgur* and its tour in Germany the same fall.¹⁰ During this field project many ensemble members conducted their own research with community elders to learn more about these traditions of their ancestors. Seeking artistic expressions of their cultural heritage in songs and dances encouraged many of them to study traditional Even world views, and also attracted attention to their own language. At the same time, the author began to make video recordings of Even texts on life histories and various themes of traditional Even culture with the aim to produce later DVD learning tools from them.

More Even language data was collected the following year, in 2000, at another seminar in Esso and during subsequent fieldwork in the Bystrinsky *rayon*. This seminar was on the theme 'Children of the North – lessons of culture', which was funded by the Franckesche Stiftungen in Halle. For this, scholars from Petropavlovsk-

Kamchatsky, native teachers and culture workers from various villages, artists and children's ensembles from Esso, Anavgai and Palana came together for a lively exchange of educational experiences and cultural practices (Kasten, ed. 2002). Through this process, our methodology in preserving endangered cultural heritage, as it was already drafted and envisaged from earlier experiences during the Itelmen project, was further refined. In a joyful atmosphere especially the youths could live up to their particular Even, Koryak and Itelmen traditions with great pride that obviously enhanced their motivation to further pursue their studies and artistic work on these themes. Such initiatives in preserving and enhancing endangered Even culture in that area provided a favourable starting point for the consequent preparation of learning tools for the forthcoming DVD series *Even language and culture*. It yielded good results because of its integrated approach combining the documentation and study of language data with cultural content or, in this case, with cultural expressions in the arts.

Language data that was collected during this seminar and later in other settlements, reindeer camps and at various fishing sites of this area (Dul'chenko 2010) were first transcribed and translated with the help of the Even language school teacher Marina Tarasova in Anavgai. Later on, Raisa Avak, the director and Even language teacher at the Institute for Advanced Teachers' Training in Palana joined our team and carried on this task. Together with her and Michael Dürr we started in 2007 to produce the first volumes of the DVD series *Even language and culture*, while David Koester from the University of Alaska in Fairbanks assisted us to edit the English translations for this and subsequent editions of the series on *Koryak language and culture*.¹¹

During our transcriptions of the Even language material we were confronted again with the same problem and difficult decisions that we already had experienced during our work on Itelmen language. While in school standardised Even textbooks according to the Magadan dialect, that is spoken west of the Okhotsk sea, were used, Even elders still spoke at home their particular speech variant of the Bystrinsky *rayon* – and often did not understand what their grandchildren had learnt at school.¹² As community members urged us to preserve their particular dialect, we decided to design our DVD learning tools accordingly, which then were used in classes in addition to conventional Even language school books.

For this, the new DVD learning tools provide a number of obvious methodological advantages. First, the elaboration of such new approaches made us even more aware of the problem of 'spoken' language versus 'standardised' language. Obviously, a certain standardisation can never completely be avoided, as also with this type of learning tools transliterations and translations must be given. Furthermore, even in audio-visual documentation – that can offer only a 'static' snapshot of a situation at a certain time – the continuous fluidity and variations, i. e. the particular dynamics of a language, cannot be fully captured.¹³ That means it is more a matter of searching

for the best possible compromise, rather than solving this obvious dilemma, but we will get back to this again later.

Second, the primary focus of the DVD learning tools is on strengthening auditory competence, whereas training grammar and active speech should be accomplished in another step, as far as possible. Most important, it seems to us that native children's first acquaintance with their own native language should be made in a most natural way – by listening and in the proper familiar and cultural environment that can at least be simulated through audio-visual recordings of such situations – viewing older (sometimes already no longer alive) family members during traditional activities and commenting on them. More research and testing has to be done on this important issue. This is why we appreciate the valuable collaboration with local teachers such as Marina Tarasova and Raisa Avak – whereas this important grassroots pedagogical perspective and experience is often neglected in most scientific programmes on preserving endangered languages. Consequently, Raisa Avak also emphasised the need to preserve – together with the Even language spoken in Kamchatka – the particular cultural traditions of this people (Avak 2010: 142). The series on Even language and culture is structured according to the following themes:

- The remembered past;
- Traditional ecological knowledge;
- Clothing and decorative arts;
- Ritual practice and world view;
- Human-environment relations as expressed in tales, songs and dance;
- Conferences, workshops and festivals.

For each of these themes, two to five volumes of about one hour each are in preparation. The DVDs are first of all aimed at the school curriculum and at cultural programmes in Kamchatka, although they can be used as well in international research and in university courses. The DVDs have English and Russian subtitles. Booklets contain the transcribed original texts with either Russian or English translations.¹⁴ It is hoped that this series can be completed within the next three years.

Koryak language and culture

At the seminars in Esso in 1999 and 2000, the author also met with native artists and experts on Koryak culture from Palana (see *map*, p. 66). During the following years, a successful collaboration on Koryak culture developed, in particular with Aleksandra Urkachan, the head of the Department of Folklore at the State Koryak Centre for Arts and Crafts in Palana, that resulted in the elaboration of innovative methodological approaches in order to produce various kinds of learning tools. In 1999, Aleksandra Urkachan joined the ensemble *Nulgur* on its tour of Germany to

perform traditional Koryak family songs. In 2000, she invited Erich Kasten to the Nymylan (Coastal Koryak) village of Lesnaya in northwestern Kamchatka, where he attended a seminar on the preservation of Koryak traditions (Kasten, ed. 2004), and where he was for the first time guest at the ritual festival *Ololo*. Immediately both drafted a programme on preserving Koryak cultural heritage that they have carried out since then up until now. In summer 2001, Erich Kasten invited Aleksandra Urkachan to the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle, where he was then working as the coordinator of the Siberian group and where they prepared her book *Veemlen* (Urkachan 2002) for publication. This monograph is extensively used as a highly regarded and useful teaching tool in Kamchatka and has recently been reprinted there as a second edition.

Since the fall of 2001, Aleksandra Urkachan and Erich Kasten have carried out field projects almost every year at various times of the year in northern Kamchatka, in remote villages, at fishing sites, and reindeer camps up to the Khailino area, where they have recorded Koryak texts and documented traditional activities. The focus has been on ritual feasts, the particularly rich tradition of family songs and oral traditions – especially *Kutkiniaku* (Raven) stories – and traditional resource use. On the latter theme they organised in 2002, for example, a series of field seminars in and around Lesnaya, during which elders demonstrated and discussed harvesting and processing activities in their own language Nymylan (coastal Koryak). Preparing for various exhibitions in Germany¹⁵ they documented in detail traditional crafts and techniques of material culture, with commentaries of craftsmen and -women in their local dialects of the Koryak language (Kasten 2003; Kasten and Dürr 2005).

At a workshop in Ossora in 2008, another new methodology was successfully employed. Elders and young artists from various villages came together and discussed and practised innovative ways of transmitting endangered cultural knowledge from older generations to the young. The striking experience from these days of mutual exchange and learning was strong motivation and enthusiasm on all sides. Therefore, it is a priority in our agenda for the years to come to conduct more workshops of this kind in other parts of northern Kamchatka as well. From the extensive cultural information and language data that has been and will be documented during such activities, electronic learning tools and print media are in preparation, and some of them are already published (Kasten, ed. 2010).

In 2012 another project has started in collaboration with the University of Fairbanks, Alaska, that investigates the potential contribution of indigenous knowledge to teaching and learning mathematics.¹⁶ For the Koryak part of this cross-cultural research, one particular focus is on decorative arts, i.e. the documentation and analysis of making patterns that adorn clothing. The results will not only lead us to understand the embedded mathematical processes used in constructing and making everyday tools and artifacts, but will also have the potential to establish an alternative learning trajectory based on indigenous knowledge systems for the teaching

of mathematics in indigenous and non-indigenous contexts. For this, a number of special editions are planned on this theme within the DVD series *Koryak language and culture*, together with more publications that are foreseen on other kinds of traditional knowledge.¹⁷

Additional learning tools and prospects for the future

Edited volumes from contributions to seminars and workshops in Kamchatka and the monographs of native project partners (see above) serve as teaching aids in schools and other cultural curricula in Kamchatka. In addition to these materials, since 2011, the quarterly periodical *Échgan* has been edited by Erich Kasten und Aleksandra Urkachan and published by the Foundation for Siberian Cultures in collaboration with one of its partner institutions in Kamchatka, the State Koryak Centre for Arts and Crafts in Palana. It serves as a teaching tool in schools and other institutions of culture in Kamchatka. It is aimed at assisting in teaching native themes, such as traditional ecological knowledge and arts and crafts in conjunction with Koryak language. Texts assembled according to various themes are given in the Koryak language with Russian translations and are presented here more in the tradition of print media and conventional teaching materials, whereas all volumes of this periodical can also be viewed and downloaded for free from the internet.¹⁸

Another initiative that is currently under preparation aims to integrate our own recently recorded field data with historical information that was collected by scientists during the 18th and 19th centuries in Kamchatka on native knowledge, in particular traditional resource use. This will be pursued through a comprehensive database project starting from the extensive registers that are compiled from the edited volumes of the *Bibliotheca Kamtschatica* series, edited by Erich Kasten and Michael Dürr and published by the Foundation of Siberian Cultures.¹⁹ This project is carried out in collaboration with the Kamchatka Branch of the Pacific Institute of Geography, Far-Eastern Department of Russian Academy of Sciences (KBPIG, FED RAS), as its foremost focus is on traditional sustainable resource use. Often these historical accounts also contain information about former native plant and animal names. Although the scientists of that time used their own transliterations, as far as they could understand these words in the respective native languages (Dürr, in Kasten et al. n.d.), some of these accounts can be useful to learn more about parts of the vernacular that were used at that time, and that have often got lost or have gone through some variations since then.

To identify former layers in – natural – continuous variations and changes in these native languages will also be a challenge in another project that focusses on oral traditions, in particular the huge stock of raven (*Kutkiniaku*) stories. Even here

we aim to compile relevant texts that were recorded by Jochelson and Bogoras – some already as sound files on wax cylinders – at the beginning of the 20th century, in order to compare and to integrate them with the great number of texts on *Kutkiniaku* that have been recorded by us a hundred years later. To show and to study such variation in the Itelmen and Koryak languages is not only interesting from a linguistic or scientific point of view. Also for local native people it helps to connect them back to a more distant past that adds to even greater esteem of their cultural heritage, and that motivates them to preserve and to further develop such valuable traditions. For this aim, the Jochelson Itelmen ('Kamchadal') texts are published in a new edition in contemporary Itelmen orthography with Russian translations (Khaloimova et al. 2013).

This forthcoming work on *Kutkiniaku* traditions reveals another issue that we had already been confronted with during the Itelmen and the Even project, and that now provides us with the opportunity to follow this up more closely. It relates to the fundamental question of to what degree printed versions of oral traditions can adequately reflect some of the significant features and messages conveyed by them. In particular, the ongoing variations and reinterpretations by individual storytellers cannot be caught and identified appropriately if oral traditions are presented in a kind of 'frozen' state in printed editions only. The other point is the important body language that is missing there, whereas it can be captured well in video presentations. Above all, printed oral traditions lose many of the languages' most crucial and valuable qualities, rendering them not only less interesting for the audience, but also prevent them from being further developed and elaborated.²⁰ Here our foreseen DVD editions on this particular theme will have clear advantages and will open up new possibilities. Certainly, they will stir up more interest on this important theme of the cultural heritage of Koryak culture, as did our previous DVD publications on traditional family songs.²¹ This is another significant genre in Koryak culture, whose basic feature and fundamental meaning is, similar to *Kutkiniaku*- and other oral traditions, its continuous variation, which is shown in the performance by different family members (and other speakers).

Our next focus on *Kutkiniaku* oral traditions will direct our attention to even more fundamental themes of Koryak culture, as it will provide access to particular Koryak world views and rules of proper social and ecological conduct and behaviour that are transmitted through these stories in an ironic way to the very young, and at the same time get reinforced among adults and elders. Connected to these and other oral traditions are important values and social and environmental ethics that provided the foundations for these peoples to survive and to create their impressive cultures under harsh conditions over many centuries. To present these materials in an appealing way, particularly to the youth, will be one of the greatest challenges for our team in the years to come.

Lessons learnt from the activities discussed above

At present, the Koryak and Even language is spoken in Kamchatka only occasionally by a shrinking number of elders. Their children sometimes still understand their language, but they are usually no longer able to speak it. While they do not use their language at home, it is no longer transmitted by the current parents' generation to their children as their 'mother tongue' (*rodnoi yazyk*). Such language shift could probably still have been prevented in the 1990s, at least for Koryak and Even, if adequate methodologies had been applied and sufficient state support had been provided to reverse that trend.

From closely monitoring and analysing the methodology of existing learning tools and their use in the school curriculum over the last 20 years, it became obvious that most of them were not able to meet the given challenge. The methodology would have to be fundamentally revised so that the native language were taught again as one's 'mother tongue', and not in the same way as a second language in school. The standardised native language school books, conceptualised and introduced by Soviet state programmes in the 1980s, and still in use, have probably contributed more to the rapid language shift than prevented it. For example, Itelmen school books (*bukvari*) are still written (and printed) in this style in various editions even for advanced classes, although this language is no longer taught in Itelmen communities due to the lack of teachers. Moreover, the complex texts in these books are given without any translations so that these might be understood in this form only by the author herself, and probably by a half dozen of the remaining elder Itelmen speakers. Another methodology, launched in the mid-1990s (Khaloimova et al. 1997) could have been more appropriate here, as these books are designed to be used even beyond the school curriculum (cf. Dudeck, *this volume*). Furthermore, they start with everyday phrases of Itelmen speech that can easily be understood, and on which the revitalisation of that language could be built upon, if community members wish to do so. Since then, more Itelmen learning tools have been designed this way (Degai and Koto 2011, Ryzhkov 2012).

A recent documentation of the use of standardised school books in Koryak classes in Lesnaya illustrates the obvious shortcomings of the previous methodology (Kasten and Dürr 2013). A particular noun is given in Russian that is then looked up by students in the Chawchaven Koryak dictionary (see *cover photo*), written down in the exercise book and then on the blackboard, and eventually pronounced accordingly – whereas it differs considerably from that word in the Nymylan Koryak dialect, still spoken by many elders in that village. The teachers are well aware of this problem and are eager to integrate the new DVD learning tools into their curriculum, not only in their Koryak language classes, but even into other subjects such as local history, ecology and so on (Kasten and Dürr 2013).²² This has the advantage that it connects

Т'ахтэскичэн.
Я пластаю рыбу.



АХТНЭМ (ТХНОМЭН)

ХТЭС – *пластать*
 ҚҰТОХ! – *Выпластай!*
 Қ'АХТАХ! – *Выпластай рыбу!*
 АХТЭЭЭН. – *Он пластает рыбу.*

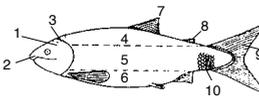


ҚЭ'М

ҚСАТОХ ХИЛВУЛАНКЭ ҚЭ'М.
Выкопай яму для кислой рыбы.
 Қ'АҢЧХ ЧЭСК ЭННА °СЫСАЛ.
Обложи внутри её травой.
 ҚТХНУХ ЭҢЧЭЛ ҚЭ'М.
Яму заполни рыбой.
 Қ'ЭЙПХ ҚЭ'М °СЫСАЛ, КТХМЭЛ.
Закрой яму травой, землёй.



ХТКНАН ФАЛЧ



ҚҰТЭХ ЭҢЧ ФАҢЛ
распластай рыбу ножом

1. хэвлыч
2. к'ухк'ух, к'фэ'н
3. кы'мтхэм
4. кэч'хч, сэқсэқ
5. увик
6. к'инк'ин
7. тэнзэсх
8. тхлочхэч лчэлчач
9. пипэ'лэч
10. мэлк'эч, схисхсх

ХИЛВЭЛ – *кислая рыба*

[11] From 'Historical-ethnographical teaching materials for the Itelmen language', Khaloimova et al. (1997), new edition 2012, p. 101.

and presents language and indigenous knowledge in an integrated way, as it has been transmitted in their natural environment before (see illustrations, *next page*).

From those experiences we are even more confirmed in our approach to integrate programmes on endangered indigenous knowledge into other relevant community activities that raise the peoples' own high regard for their cultural heritage. This contributes to stimulating the crucial and indispensable motivation, in particular among the youth, to maintain and to further enhance their cultures, for example, through artistic expressions. Therefore, the Foundation for Siberian Cultures supports native artists in performing at museum exhibitions, in addition to its strong emphasis on and contribution to the preservation of endangered languages (Kasten 1998, 2005b, 2009c). It also supports tours by youth dance ensembles²³ in Germany and other parts of Europe. The experiences that they usually have during their visits abroad and the appreciation that they receive there for the artistic expressions of their highly valued cultural heritage are reflected back to their communities where these create favourable results (Kravchenko 2010). In order to direct additional attention to such native performances among an international audience these are also frequent themes in the special internet format of the Foundation for Siberian Cultures, 'Shows on the Web'.²⁴ A strong focus of our work should, therefore, be directed towards supporting or creating favourable socio-economic environments



[12] Sharing traditional knowledge with the grandson in Even language at a fishing camp near Anavgai.



[13] Integrated school class on Koryak language and local history with DVD learning tools in Lesnaya.

in the given communities where it could be made easier for native world views and relevant values and expressions of their own cultures to thrive.

When presenting outward expressions of one's own culture, there is the risk that the performers may come to view their culture as a commodity (see Kasten and De Graaf, p. 9, *this volume*), if they expect immediate (financial) returns from it. This is in line with increasingly commercialised social relations even within native communities, where, fortunately, traditional behaviour and values such as mutual help and sharing are still strong (Kasten 2012: 80 f.). Certainly, artists depend on remuneration for their work in order to make their living and to concentrate on further developing their creative talents. However, for example, selling secret rituals or world views to tourists as kinds of souvenirs can be questionable, as this may remove inherent meanings from these ideas. Many of the important values and orientations that are communicated through such rituals would consequently no longer be transmitted or be properly understood by young people (Kasten 2009a: 29). Therefore, short-term material gain has to be viewed and balanced against possible long-term detrimental effects while presenting and offering one's cultural heritage to others.

On the other hand, new models for creating feedback, even from the artists to support the preservation of endangered cultures in their communities, have been tested and successfully employed. Through a special agreement, their commitment and responsibility to participate in this process was called in and could be demonstrated at home, for example, by the youth ensemble *Shkolnye gody*: A certain part of the financial contribution from German sources for its tour in Germany in 2004 was transferred to them in the form of the edited (Russian) conference volume entitled *Preservation and Revitalisation of Traditional Ritual Feasts of Coastal Koryaks (Nymylans)* (Kasten, ed. 2004) which also serves as a learning tool. Copies of that book were then distributed for free by ensemble members in their home communities in Kamchatka. This made the young artists – another time – proud of their performance upon their return, when they were acknowledged for supporting the culture of their people even at home. Psychologically it is important and stimulating especially for younger people to feel rewarded for such initiatives that do not serve exclusively their own individual gains, but also express their responsibility for the needs of the community as a whole. There might be other creative models of this kind to think of in order to install or support proper (communal) motivation among the young to preserve their native cultures – according to the tradition of these peoples and in contrast to modern more individualistic ways of thinking.

As soon as sufficient project-funding or donations may be made available for the above-mentioned applied programmes in the future, native communities should be compensated in the first place for their valuable contribution in sharing their indigenous knowledge and cultural expertise with us, and with the interested general public. These funds should not be handed over in the form of individual cash payments, in order to avoid detrimental side-effects within the community (see Kas-

ten and De Graaf, p. 9, *this volume*), but should rather be used for certain projects such as community-driven workshops, learning tools and so on.²⁵ In order to create the appropriate sense of motivation among community members it seems to be important that they become involved in the process, not for the purpose of individual material gain, as this would blur and divert attention from the more significant over-arching aims and from their obligation to take upon themselves their own responsibilities to preserve their endangered cultures.

The latter also concerns Russian state authorities, as these should not get used to the trend of these programmes being mostly sponsored by international organisations and from abroad. Russia has become a prosperous country as a whole, although barely balanced in a fair way among its entire population. It would be up to those who have gained a lot from the economic transformations of the last number of years to assume responsibility towards their country and its people to whom they owe their fortunes. Furthermore, it would be the duty of Russian state authorities to call in these obligations, and direct sufficient funds into these programmes.

Regarding remuneration for the international scientists who direct or participate in the projects that have been presented here, it should be mentioned that they work voluntarily beside their permanent jobs in academic positions or they derive their incomes from other scientific project work. Admittedly, this kind of volunteer work is not always properly understood in Russia, where it has occasionally even been discredited, as already in the 1990s (Alexandra Lavrillier, *personal communication*, 4 October 2011);²⁶ and especially for young international scientists this cannot offer an attractive perspective – whereas it seems to be the only way to bridge the gap until such projects are adequately funded.

Against this background and according to relevant international standards that also have developed in recent years from similar experiences even in other parts of the world, most programmes of the Foundation for Siberian Cultures are carried out now only on a co-funding basis. In the beginning, in 2002, we sent 100 copies of Aleksandra Urkachan's book *Veemlen* to Kamchatka for free distribution in the communities. However, we later found out that these were sold there and also in other places such as in Khabarovsk by members of a Kamchatkan cultural institution, on their own account. Since then we do not deliver ready-printed and fully financed teaching materials to Siberia any more, as long as our philosophy is not adequately shared by relevant partners there. In order to expect cooperation and co-funding from local authorities we provide – according to recent agreements – only the setting copy of these materials, from which a sufficient number of copies is printed (and financed) in Kamchatka. Only a limited number of copies are given for free to local co-authors and main cultural institutions, libraries and schools in the area to which the traditions that are presented in the materials pertain. Thus, it is up to international organisations and to the Russian authorities to contribute their share to this collaborative and meaningful process.

Conclusions

Many scientific programmes aimed at documenting endangered languages are bound by their guidelines to address community-oriented activities, although these goals often come across as mere tokens of political correctness. In most cases they have not had significant effects in preserving these languages within the communities. On the other hand, such approaches to documenting and analysing endangered languages sometimes give the impression that these languages are being treated more as 'curious specimens' such as items in ancient ethnographic collections. Meanwhile, the pressing need to maintain linguistic and cultural diversity for the future of humankind is often ignored. Apparently, applied anthropological initiatives (see Lavrillier, *this volume*) achieve lower status in scientific research programmes, where they obviously do not attract adequate attention and funding. However more recently one can identify changing trends, such as in current programmes of the National Science Foundation. But so far, scientists pursuing academic careers could expect more credit for keen analysis and elaborate theories than for undertaking struggles at a grassroots level in the communities.

For international organisations it is often the easiest and politically correct option to hand over relevant funds to major native organisations, generally based in the city, and trust that they will carry out the programmes as expected. However, the native urban community is often fragmented and factionalised, especially with regards to securing such funds and deciding how these will be used. Moreover, there is often a great distance²⁷ – and not only physically – from the city to the regional centres and from there to even more isolated settlements, fishing sites and reindeer camps, where this kind of support is most urgently needed, but only seldom received.

Even international organisations that are active themselves in the region could in many cases attain their proclaimed goals more effectively. Often their focus is more on well-financed fact-finding missions and on series of international conferences on these issues. These activities are not sufficiently matched by consistent and probably more urgently needed concrete initiatives in the communities themselves in order to put into effect relevant programmes there (see Kasten, *above*, Lavrillier, Odé, *this volume*). Therefore, many native people perceive such international organisations more as self-serving groups that are concerned, first and foremost, with meeting their own needs.

Ethnic festivals (*prazdniki*) in urban or regional centres provide Russian government officials and culture workers with auspicious opportunities to celebrate themselves. This is a well-known phenomenon in the tradition of former Soviet practise and is carrying on the political function of its 'Houses of Culture'. Although many residents consider these events a welcome distraction, considerable amounts from the culture budget are consumed this way to demonstrate – well-covered by the media – the government's endeavours in the interests of native cultures. At the same time

funds for concrete programmes and relevant learning tools to preserve endangered cultural traditions in more remote settlements far away from these centres are cut back or do not even exist. But it is just in those places where these means could be used most effectively to counteract the afore-mentioned trends of loss of linguistic and cultural diversity. There such diverse and unique traditions in some cases are still alive.

Finally, it is certainly appreciated that scientists and international organisations are concerned about maintaining cultural and linguistic diversity and that they see its endangerment as a serious problem for the future of humankind. The problem is, however, the obviously missing or inadequate balance between fact-finding missions, conference discussions and scientific research on the one hand, and matching programmes and sufficient funding for implementing appropriate measures on the other. First and foremost, the latter may be in the position to stop the ongoing trends of language endangerment and loss of cultural diversities that should have been sufficiently researched and clearly identified by now.

Notes

- 1 I am grateful to my friends among the Dzawada'enuxw of Kincome Inlet who first taught me the basics of true collaborative projects. For providing me access to conduct a scientific research project on the 'Potlatch' with them I first had to consider what I could give the respective native community in return. Thus we drafted an exhibition project that I brought to fruition at the Ethnological Museum in Berlin in 1989, through which Dzawada'enuxw artists were promoted to a wider foreign public and from which the given Native community benefited as a whole (Kasten 1990).
- 2 http://www.kulturstiftung-sibirien.de/pro_1271.html
- 3 Interim results from these projects were discussed in my seminars at the Free University of Berlin in the 1990s with students who started their own Siberian field projects at that time, and I am particularly grateful to the valuable and inspiring exchanges with Stephan Dudeck during that time.
- 4 I am grateful to the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft and to the Max Planck Gesellschaft that funded a number of scientific research projects in Kamchatka. However, they did not share the concern for the applied anthropology modules within such projects that are presented in this article and for which no funding was provided, so that these had to be carried out by me and the team aside from my scientific projects on a voluntary basis.
- 5 For more information on the state of the Itelmen language at the beginning of the project see: Kasten 2009b.
- 6 The particular native language situation in Kamchatka differs obviously from what we learn in this volume, for example on relevant Evenk and Forest Nenets cases by Alexandra Lavrillier and Stephan Dudeck, whereas the situation in Kamchatka seems to be quite similar to what Hidetoshi Shiraishi and Tjeerd de Graaf have found with the Ainu and Nivkh (*this volume*). As for the Itelmen, also among the Even and Koryak the present parents' generation is not in full command of its native language anymore and is not prepared to use it in primary education. Consequently, the model of nomad schools that seems to be promising for other regions in the Russian North would probably not apply to Kamchatka, where native culturally-related peda-

gogies and learning tools have to be designed differently. Here we should recall and be aware of the shortcomings of any generalised solutions such as those that were promoted in later Soviet times, without taking into consideration that these should fit particular local situations within the country.

- 7 http://www.siberian-studies.org/publications/PDF/ILC2additions_E.pdf
- 8 http://www.kulturstiftung-sibirien.de/vir_26_E.html
- 9 http://www.kulturstiftung-sibirien.de/pro_123_E.html
- 10 http://www.kulturstiftung-sibirien.de/ver_422_E.html
- 11 http://www.kulturstiftung-sibirien.de/mat_32_E.html
- 12 Regarding the Evenk case, Alexandra Lavrillier shared similar concerns, as to her it is not comprehensible that a particular standard for language education at school and for printed learning materials was chosen from Evenk spoken in the Krasnoiarsk area. The particular dialect of the 3,000 Evenk who live there is not representative of the rest of the 30,000 Evenks, where especially among their southern groups much more common features can be found (personal communication, 4 October 2011).
- 13 Continuous fluidity and variation is obviously an inherent feature of oral traditions. Those texts that we recorded at different times were never the same, but in the meantime were extensively further elaborated. Another striking fact is that it has proven almost impossible to let the given speaker make the transcription of his or her own spoken text, as the person usually insisted on modifying it considerably.
- 14 Tables of contents and sample clips of the so far published DVDs can be viewed in the internet: http://www.kulturstiftung-sibirien.de/mat_32_E.html
- 15 Ethnographic items were first collected for an exhibition at the Westfälisches Museum für Naturkunde in Münster in 2003 (and later in Windhoek/Namibia 2005–2007): http://www.kulturstiftung-sibirien.de/ver_415_E.html. Other items were shown at exhibitions at the Zentral- und Landesbibliothek in Berlin in 2005: http://www.kulturstiftung-sibirien.de/ver_416_E.html; and at the *Linden-Museum* in Stuttgart in 2009: http://www.kulturstiftung-sibirien.de/ver_417_E.html
- 16 http://www.kulturstiftung-sibirien.de/pro_1274_E.html
- 17 Tables of contents and sample clips of the DVDs that have been published so far can be viewed under: http://www.kulturstiftung-sibirien.de/mat_33_E.html
- 18 http://www.siberian-studies.org/publications/echgan_E.html
- 19 http://www.siberian-studies.org/publications/bika_E.html
- 20 During our seminar, a lively discussion arose on this issue. Tesesa Valiente questioned if oral traditions should be transcribed anyway or if one shouldn't rather leave them as they are. Michael Dürr added that scripting is a highly complicated process of transformation, and the written result is never the same as the oral original. But on the other hand, he continued, you need to write it down for some aspects of teaching, because somebody who is not fluent in the language has otherwise no access to the rich oral tradition without written texts. (personal communication, October 4, 2011)
- 21 http://www.kulturstiftung-sibirien.de/mat_332_E.html
- 22 http://www.kulturstiftung-sibirien.de/mat_33.html. Samples from a television documentary show the integrated use of the new DVD learning tools in the school curriculum in Kamchatka: http://www.kulturstiftung-sibirien.de/vir_31_E.html.
- 23 http://www.kulturstiftung-sibirien.de/ver_42_E.html
http://www.kulturstiftung-sibirien.de/vir_29_E.html
- 24 http://www.kulturstiftung-sibirien.de/virtuell_E.html
- 25 Even here one should be aware of keeping the right balance, as not well thought out (material)

- support from the outside could be mistaken as ‘missionising’ or as ‘persuading’ the indigenous communities in a paternalistic way to ‘imitate’ certain moves (cf. Vakhtin, p. 262, *this volume*).
- 26 See also the latest editions of ‘KO-RUS Kurier, Freiwilligkeit als Voraussetzung und Katalysator für zivilgesellschaftliches Engagement’, *Newsletter des Auswärtigen Amts der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, 8. und 9. Ausgabe, 2012, also in Russian.
- 27 In Kamchatka, similar trends of ‘superscribing’ native culture and ‘top-down concepts propagated by ethnic elites’ can be identified such as in the case of the urban Yi community in China described by Kraef (p. 240f., *this volume*).

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