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**Description of Minority Languages in Russia on the Basis of  
Census Data, Sound Archives and Fieldwork**

**Tjeerd de Graaf [tdegraaf@fryske-akademy.nl]**

The UNESCO Atlas of Endangered Languages considers various stages of endangerment and provides a survey of the available data on these languages in separate areas of the world. A computer version of the Atlas makes it possible to correct and add information on particular items based on new available data and the results of fieldwork. This keeps the contents on minority languages up-to-date and provides a source for comparative research and the preparation of teaching materials. This presentation illustrates the work on the UNESCO Atlas with data available for the languages of Siberia.

The Atlas distinguishes five degrees of endangerment, varying from safe to extinct. These degrees depend on a number of factors which characterize the vitality of the language, such as the intergenerational language transmission, the number of speakers, etc. The most relevant factors will be considered for some endangered languages in the Russian Federation in relation to the data of the UNESCO Atlas, the results of the 2010 census and other publications. A comparison with earlier census data shows certain demographic tendencies, which have an important impact on the language situation. To illustrate this a few examples for languages in Siberia will be given.

One of the factors determining the language vitality is the availability of materials for language education and literacy. From 2006 until 2013 we received grants from the Endangered Archives Programme of the British Library, which made it possible to re-record material from mainly private collections of historical sound carriers according to up-to date technology and to store them in safe places together with the related metadata. The storage facilities provided by the project have modernised the possible archiving activities in the Russian Federation. This work also added useful material to the safeguarding of the minority languages in Russia.

The Foundation for Siberian Cultures, which was founded in 2010, has the aim to preserve the indigenous languages of the Russian Federation and the ecological knowledge expressed in them. During our fieldwork expeditions to Sakhalin, Kamchatka, Northern Yakutia and Central Siberia we have studied processes of language shift and language death for some minority peoples of Russia, in particular for the Nivkh of Sakhalin, the Itelmen and Koryak of Kamchatka, the Yukagir of Sakha and the Siberian Mennonites. The results of this fieldwork and the reconstructed data from sound archives provide important information for the preparation of language descriptions, grammars, dictionaries and edited collections of oral and written literature. These can also be used to develop teaching methods, in particular for the younger members of certain ethnic groups who do not have sufficient knowledge of their native language.

**Personal Data:**

Name: Tjeerd de Graaf  
Nationality: Netherlands  
Occupation: Honorary research fellow at the Frisian Academy and the Mercator European Centre for Multilingualism and Language Learning

**Short biography:**

Since 1990, Tjeerd de Graaf, associate professor of Phonetics at Groningen University until 2003, has specialized in the phonetic aspects of Ethnolinguistics. In 1990, he made his first fieldwork trip with a Japanese expedition to the minority peoples of Sakhalin. Since then, he has contributed to various research projects on endangered languages and the use of sound archives related to ethnic minorities in Russia. This takes place in co-operation with colleagues in the Russian Federation and Japan. Most of these projects were financially supported by special grants from the European Union and the Netherlands Organization of Scientific Research NWO. In 1998, Tjeerd de Graaf received a Doctorate Honoris Causa from the University of St.Petersburg for his work in the field of ethnolinguistics. Since 2002, he has been a board member of the Foundation for Endangered Languages (Great Britain) and a research fellow at the Mercator Centre of the Frisian Academy, which co-ordinates research on European minorities - in particular the language, history and culture of Frisian, one of the lesser used languages of Europe. In the first half of 2003, he spent a semester as visiting professor at the University of St.Petersburg. In 2004 and 2005, Tjeerd de Graaf worked as guest researcher at the Slavic Research Center of Hokkaido University (Japan). Since 2006 some of his projects have been financially supported by the Endangered Archives Programme at the British Library.

Address for correspondence: Goudsbloemweg 9  
NL 9765 HP Paterswolde  
Netherlands

Telephone: +31-50-3092218 (home) or +31-6-30041848 (mobile)  
e-mail: [tdegraaf@fryske-akademy.nl](mailto:tdegraaf@fryske-akademy.nl)  
URL: [www.mercator-research.eu](http://www.mercator-research.eu) → Endangered Languages