

Modern technologies of minority language development

based on Veps example

Restoration of written Veps language began in the late 1980's after it was banned in 1937. Thanks to the vigorous activity of the Karelian public organization "Veps Cultural Society", the Veps language was spread to schools, universities and Karelian mass media.

Currently, the young Veps is developing as supradialectal language being used in the fields of education and culture in all traditional Veps regions, such as: Karelia, Leningrad and Vologda. There are Veps textbooks as well as dictionaries and fiction literature published in the Republic of Karelia. Since 1991, began the publication of a monthly newspaper in Veps and Russian languages, called: "*Kodima*" (Native Land). Since 2011, children's magazine "*Kipinä*" (Sparkle) was issued quarterly as well as an annual almanac "*Verez, tullei*" (breeze) in Veps language.

In 1990 Veps language was heard for the first time on Karelian radio and television. Channels in Veps language began broadcasting short news releases, which were conducted by students of the Chair of Karelian and Veps languages of Petrozavodsk State University. Initially, the Veps language radio and television broadcasting was not conducted on a regular basis, but during the last 15 years, thematic TV shows have been broadcasted once a week, lasting for at least 10-15 minutes per show. There are specialists, on the radio and TV of Karelia, with knowledge of Veps language that have received special education in Petrozavodsk State University.

Veps language can also be heard weekly on Radio Karelia, for at least half an hour during a week. The program participants are residents of Veps villages. They are teachers, scientists, students, schoolchildren and also employees of cultural and mass media institutions. Veps journalists travel to all Veps regions, including those beyond Karelia. They bring unique, rare and very valuable content for their radio and television programs in Veps language. The programs discuss various issues of modern life of the Vepsian people and Veps villages. It covers all events that occur in life of Vepsians: The release of new books and periodicals in Veps language, projects of interest, Vepsians' participation in conferences, seminars, etc.

Since 2014, radio and television broadcasting in the Republic of Karelia has shifted to a digital format. The representatives of Veps people now have an opportunity to tune into FM waves and listen to broadcasts in their native language through a receiver or a mobile phone. All Veps language transmissions are posted on the official website of the State Television and Radio Company "Karelia" [<http://petrozavodsk.rfn.ru/>]. Karelian radio and television has

become a platform through which Veps people can receive information in their native language, regardless of their place of residence.

Veps community has done a lot to ensure that the state, through its regional and district authorities, would acknowledge the necessity for a special relationship to develop and preserve the Veps language in their native places of residence. Now it has become their duty in accordance with the Russian legislation on indigenous peoples. In 2000, Vepsians were included in the Unified list of indigenous minority peoples of the Russian Federation and in 2006 they were included in the List of Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and Far East of the Russian Federation. Due to these decisions, annual subsidies are being granted from the federal budget to support socio-economic and cultural development of the traditional Veps places of residence.

Currently, these are small funds, but they enable implementing original projects for development of Veps language and culture. In 2013, a performance in Veps language called "*Vauktad uned*" (White dreams) was created and displayed for the first at the National Theatre of the Republic of Karelia. The performance is based on poems by Veps poets. It was presented at the National Theatre of Karelia in Petrozavodsk, in Veps villages of Karelia, as well as in Kirkenes (Norway).

During the same year, Veps folk group "*Noid*" headed by V. Soloviev shot the first music video in Veps language. The video shows a story of a traditional wedding ceremony, where the bride is crying over the loss of her "white freedom" symbolizing her farewell to girlhood.

One of the most important Veps language and culture popularization initiatives of the Veps youth is creation of popular scientific and ethnographic films.

Their preparation, production and distribution to cultural and educational institutions in the Veps residential areas is carried out by non-governmental organizations on projects funds obtained on a competitive basis. In recent years, the production of Veps films is mainly being financed by programs supporting activities of non-governmental organizations by the Ministry on National Policy of the Republic of Karelia.

The first film in Veps language "*Vepsan sai*" (Veps wedding) recreating all the stages of a traditional wedding ceremony was filmed in 2006. It has been duplicated in Russian and Finnish languages. The film "*Vepsan sai*" won 1st place in the Debut category at the 13th International Television Festival called: "Finno-Ugric world" that took place on 1-3 November 2006 in the city of Izhevsk.

Me and Vladimir Slavov are the authors of following films in Veps language. In 2008, we created a film in Veps language called "*Živatad vepsalaižiden elos*" based on an eponymous book of I.Y. Vinokurova (Animals in Veps' life).

In 2012 a film came out called "*Vepslaižen kodin sudain*" (Life of a Veps house) based on a book of Z.I. Strogalshchikova, named "Traditional accommodation in Mezhozerye".

"*Živatad vepslaižiden elos*" was recognized as the best film and won the Grand Prix at the first international Finno-Ugric film festival in June 2014 held in Estonia.

In 2014, a film "Sel'ktas vedes kala kokib "(Fish bites in pure water) was created in Veps language telling about fishing, a traditional Veps trade.

"The Shepherd's horn.", 2015.

You can hear "live" Veps language in all the movies and they also have subtitles in Russian and English languages, which makes them accessible to the large public. Movies are shown on Karelian television channels, posted on the Internet and published on DVD to be distributed to cultural and educational institutions.

They are shared free of charge to schools, universities, libraries, museums, offices of national and cultural Veps organizations of the Republic of Karelia, Leningrad and Vologda regions, as well as to interregional and federal cultural centers of Finno-Ugric peoples of Russia and Finno-Ugric countries.

Also the "Vepsan Paginklub" (Vepsky Conversation Club) plays a significant role in preserving the Veps language. The club was created in Petrozavodsk at the Republican Center of National Cultures in 2011 and this year celebrates its fifth anniversary.

Vepsians of different ages participate in the weekly meetings at the club, having different levels of proficiency in Veps language. The main task of the club is to expand the use of spoken Veps language. At the meetings you can hear the sound of poetry in Veps language. Also films are shown and recordings are played. There are also interviews conducted with writers, poets, scientists and teachers on various topics.

In 2012, the Veps Conversation Club received a grant support from the Ministry of the Republic of Karelia on National Politics, Relationship with Public and Religious Associations and Mass Media in order to acquire multimedia equipment for organizing of club meetings online via Internet.

In this form, the participants of the Conversation Club aren't just Veps of the Leningrad and Vologda regions, but also all those interested in the preservation and popularization of Veps language and culture. The Vepsians living abroad in Finland, Hungary, Estonia, Scotland and Cyprus participate in the club meetings through Internet. The club not only unites all Vepsians, but also allows them to be aware of what is happening in the lives of their people.

In the summer of 2014, a very important initiative of the Vepsian youth was implemented. It was a project called "Cultural trooper of the youth." It was carried out with a support of Karelian public organization named "Nevond" (Council) in the framework of

interregional project "Empowerment of indigenous women and youth in the Russian Federation." The project involved conducting short-term courses for residents of Veps villages, teaching them reading and writing skills in Veps language.

Due to prolonged absence of written Veps language, many representatives of middle-aged and older generations, except for employees of certain professions, such as teachers and cultural workers, only know the spoken language, while remaining "illiterate" in their native language. A special workbook was created for the course, as well as CD records containing electronic versions of Kodima, the Veps newspaper, as well as other Internet resources in Veps language and about Veps people.

There were 115 Veps representatives taking part in the "Cultural trooper of the youth", comprising of different professional backgrounds and different ages. They were participants from 13 Veps villages of Vologda and Leningrad regions and Republic of Karelia.

Most of them were fluent in spoken language, but never studied the mother tongue in schools or other educational institutions. They not only learned to read and write in their native language, but they also became familiar with literature in Veps language, published in Karelia.

During the project implementation, libraries, schools and cultural institutions of Leningrad and Vologda regions, were given approximately 1,500 copies of various publications in Veps language and about Vepsian people: textbooks, dictionaries, children's books, books on local history, scientific journals, newspapers and magazines and DVD films.

In the summer of 2015, "Veps language for beginners" project was implemented by Veps youth of Karelia targeted at Veps population living in Leningrad region. The main organizers of the project were the Government of the Leningrad region, the Pushkin Institute in St. Petersburg and Karelian regional public organization "The Veps Culture Society". The main objective of the project was to teach Veps language to 100 people that were indigenous inhabitants of Leningrad region, living in five Veps settlements. A specific program was developed for teaching this course, a "Vepsan kel" teaching manual accompanied by 100 pages of guidelines for teaching Veps language. The training toolkit itself is comprised of phonetic, grammatical and lexical material structured in a certain order. There are also exercises, subjective and narrative illustrations, photos and tables. The teaching manual "Vepsan kel" is intended for people who don't speak Veps language. Nina Zaitseva and Elizabeth Haritogova are the editors of the book.

Veps language teachers received practical consulting with a final testing program for the participants that was specially created. The duration of the courses in each settlement was 50 academic hours. The courses sparked interest among the locals and now they are waiting for continuing their studies. The initial print run of textbooks was 130 copies. 2,500 additional copies were published by the end of 2015.

This year, the project was continued. The government of the Leningrad region is implementing the project together with the Pushkin Institute and the Veps Cultural Society in

order to create methodical teaching manuals, recommendations and more challenging program. The courses will be organized for the residents of five Veps settlements in the Leningrad region. They will begin in September this year. There will be a training seminar for the teachers, right before the courses begin.

Currently, the Veps Culture Society is implementing a project on creating educational video lessons for beginners in Veps language. Given the increasing use of information technology and electronic resources, creation of video lessons in Veps language will be a new awareness-raising and educational product for studying this young written language. Similar materials have been developed and successfully implemented by many Finno-Ugric peoples (Komi, Mordovians, Mari and Udmurt), as well as Northern minority peoples.

Veps language is a young written language. Despite its relatively young age (Veps alphabet was approved in 1989), Veps language is being used in contexts that include published literature, mass media and ethnographic films. But, unfortunately, to date, there is no Veps educational material in electronic form, which would help people to study the language on their own. In Karelia, there have been previously implemented education projects, such as Finnish language learning, for example, which became available to everyone via internet and were a great success among the inhabitants of the republic. We are confident that video lessons in Veps language will be sought after by young people and also middle aged and older generations. They can be used as a form of auxiliary educational material for further education. This applies, for example, for Veps language courses, school and professional training curricula. The Video lessons will allow to cover a wider range of people enabling independent Veps language learning.

There are 5 lessons 10 minutes each on the most important topics planned to be created within the project.

The implementation of such projects as "*Vepsan pagin klub*", the Cultural trooper, creating popular films in Veps language on TV, as well as performances, videos, various guides and video tutorials are very effective means to promote Veps language as well as culture of the Veps people. It raises their prestige, maintaining and strengthening their ethnic identity. These projects are most interesting for children and young audiences, which contributes to preservation and development of Veps language and culture in circumstances where Veps language has largely lost its position in family communication. They increase interest towards Veps language and cultural traditions not only in Veps community, but also among the representatives of other peoples, thus contributing to establishment of good ethnic relations in their residential regions.

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