Yupik Language Loss

Presented By:
Francesca Oglivie
Stephanie Jakimczyk
Felicia Smith
Some facts about language loss...
It is believed that 90% of the 7,000 languages currently spoken in the world will become extinct by 2050.
Languages are being lost at double the rate of endangered mammals.

Languages are being lost at four times the rate of endangered birds.
In the future, the world may be dominated by as few as a dozen languages if this trend continues.
Language loss is terribly sad for those people involved. Does it matter for those of us who are not involved? Should we care and why?
A few of the reasons why language loss effects us all.

- Each language is beautiful and unique and each one adds to the beauty of the world.
- Theoretical linguists need the largest variety of human languages in order to complete their scientific studies.
The world cannot afford to lose the diversity and knowledge that is part of each unique language. Individual languages view grammar differently. The loss of any language limits our ability to think differently.

Ethics impact language loss. Who should choose which languages carry on and which languages are lost?
Most importantly, as we continue to work towards understanding the world, the biosphere, the web of life, and our ecosystem, it is crucial that we understand our linguistic and intellectual diversity as a system. Our survival as human beings depends on it.
Fewer languages results in fewer thoughts.

Languages are systems of highly specialized information.

Each language provides its own perspective of the world. Each language does more than just provide different words for things.

Linguistic complexity impacts our cultural survival as biological complexity impacts our cultural survival.
Healthy Languages
vs.
Dying Languages

“Healthy” languages are those that continue to acquire new speakers. These new speakers are most often children. The new speakers must acquire the language as their first language (L1).

Some languages exist as a second or ceremonial language. These languages are considered “dying” when children stop learning them.
For example, out of 20 native Alaskan languages, only 2 are still being learned by children.
The Yupik language comes from Eskimo people of western and southwestern Alaska.

Within the Yupik language there can be different dialects. This language has a plural form called Yupiit and it means “real people.”

As researching this language there are different ways to spell the language. The reason to use the apostrophe in the name Yup’ik compared to Siberian Yupik,” exemplifies the central Yupik’s orthography, where “the apostrophe represent germination or lengthening of the ‘p’ sound.”
Yupik

Siberian Yupik is the only one spoken by everyone in two villages of about one thousand people altogether on St. Lawrence Island.

Central Alaskan Yup’ik is the largest language in Alaska, and children speak that language in 16 of 60 villages.

There are 18 other languages in Alaska with no children speakers.
Siberian Yupik is a distinct language from Central Alaskan Yup'ik. Notice that the former is spelled without an apostrophe.

Siberian Yupik (also St. Lawrence Island Yupik) is spoken in the two St. Lawrence Island villages of Gambell and Savoonga.

The total Siberian Yupik population in Alaska is about 1,100, and of that number about 1,050 speak the language.
The Yupik Language

Within the Yupik there are 5 distinct language which differ enough from one another that speakers on one cannot understand speakers of another.

- Sirenik – spoken by few people in Siberia
- Naukan – spoken only Siberia (Central)
- Siberian - spoken by the majority of Eskimos in Siberia
- Alaska Yupik – spoken by the majority of Eskimos in Siberia
- Yupik (same as Alaska Yupik)– spoken off the mainland in Alaska
- Alutiiq – spoken from the Alaska Peninsula eastward
Development of Yupik writing

The Yupik was not a written language until the Europeans arrived around the beginning of the 19th century. The Yupik language has a rich oral traditions, myths, stories, and songs passed down from generation to generation.
## Central Alaskan Yupik Alphabet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>a</th>
<th>aa</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>b</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>[a]</td>
<td>[a:]</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>[b]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>[k, s]</td>
<td>[d]</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>[e]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>[f]</td>
<td>[γ, g]</td>
<td>g</td>
<td>[h]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td>[i]</td>
<td>[i:]</td>
<td>h</td>
<td>[j]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j</td>
<td>[j:]</td>
<td>[k]</td>
<td>k</td>
<td>[k:]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k</td>
<td>[l]</td>
<td>[m]</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>[n]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l</td>
<td>[ŋ]</td>
<td>[m:]</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>[n:]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td>[o]</td>
<td>[o:]</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>[p]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>[p:]</td>
<td>[q]</td>
<td>[q:]</td>
<td>[r]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r</td>
<td>[s]</td>
<td>[t]</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>[t:]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s</td>
<td>[t̴]</td>
<td>[t̴s]</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>[t:]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t</td>
<td>[u]</td>
<td>[u:]</td>
<td>u</td>
<td>[β, v]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td>[w]</td>
<td>[x]</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>[i, j]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U</td>
<td>[z]</td>
<td>[?]</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>[V]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>[W]</td>
<td>[x]</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>[Y]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>[x]</td>
<td>[Y]</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>[Z]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>[Z]</td>
<td>[?]</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>[Y]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>[Z]</td>
<td>[?]</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>[Z]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Note: The Central Alaskan Yupik Alphabet includes both sounds and symbols, with diacritical marks for pronunciation.
## Central Siberian Yupik Alphabet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Central Siberian Yupik</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Аа Бб Вв Гг Г’г’ Ёб Ёё</td>
<td>a b v g g’ ĝ d je jo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Жж Зз Ии Йй Кк К’к’ Кк Лл Льлъ</td>
<td>ž z i j k k’ k l l’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Мм Нн НЪнъ Н’н’ Нн Оо Пп Рр Сс</td>
<td>m n n” n’ n o p r s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Тт Уу Ūū Фф Хх Х’х’ Хх Цц Чч</td>
<td>t u ū f h h’ h c č</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Шш ШШ ЬЪ Ыъ ЬЪ Ээ ЮЮ ЯЯ</td>
<td>š šč ” y ’ e ju ja</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[a] [b] [v] [g] [ɣ] [ɣ] [d] [je] [jo] [ʒ] [z] [i] [j̞] [k] [k’] [k] [l] [l’] [m] [n] [ŋ] [ŋ̞] [ŋ̞] [ŋ] [o] [p] [r] [ʂ] [t] [u] [β] [f] [x] [x] [x] [t̚] [ʃ] [ʃ̞] [i] [i] [ɛ] [ju] [ja] [ʔ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Yupik Language is in School Districts
One of Alaska's largest rural districts LKSD services a 22,000 square mile area roughly the size of the state of West Virginia. Approximately 3800 students (K-12) of mostly Yup'ik (Eskimo) heritage are served by the district's 352 teachers and numerous paraprofessionals. One-fourth of the certified teachers are Yup'ik, the greatest percentage of indigenous educators of any district in Alaska.
Mission Statement

The mission of the Lower Kuskokwim School District is to ensure bilingual, culturally appropriate and effective education for all students, thereby providing them with the opportunity to be responsible, productive citizens.
LKSD Programs

- Yupik First Language Programs (transitional programs) began in the early 1970’s when most of the elementary schools were run by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

- The children would be immerse in English as soon as possible. The teachers would tape student’s mouths shut if they heard them speak Yupik.
Within the 27 schools in LKSD there are a variety of different bilingual models used.

14 schools have Yupik First Language Program (YFL) is for primary grades

- These children come to school mostly speaking Yupik
- They are taught in Yupik for the first few years and gradually transitioned into a classroom that is taught in English
In villages where there are children who are not fluent in Yupik, the village forms a Yupik Second Language (immersion program)

- Children taught in both English and Yupik
- Yupik used for most of the school day in the first three years
- 3rd grade is when children are experiencing an intense transition to English
LKSD Programs continued…

- 2 schools have a one-way Yupik immersion program
  - Students are proficient English speakers
  - Have a background in Yupik but are not Yupik speakers
    - First few years are taught in Yupik
The Yup’ik Immersion Program is based on the same elementary school curriculum offered in all of the district’s schools, including language arts, math, science, social studies, physical education, art, and music. Ayaprun Elitnarviat is located in Bethel, AK. The school serves 168 students, grades K-6.

Kindergarten and first grade are taught totally in Yup’ik, after which point English is gradually phased into the curriculum. K-2 (phases 1-6) is mainly taught in Yup’ik with oral English Language Development delivered by the durations specified below. Yup’ik is taught 75% of the time in the 3rd grade (phase 5-7), and 50% of the time in grades 4-6 (phases 6-22), so that while students learn the regular subjects, they also learn Yup’ik. English Reading and Language Arts will be taught in the 3rd grade (up to phase 7), and starting in grade 4 (phase 6 on up) English Language Arts, Reading, Health, and Math will be taught in English. All other subject matter will be taught in Yup’ik. For more details, see the section on What To Expect (and Not): Common Questions About Immersion Programs.
Yupik Language in Schools continued…

- Length of English Language Instruction
  Level 1-15-20 minutes
  Level 2-30 minutes
  Level 3-60 minutes
  Level 4-25% of the day in English
  Level 5-7-50% of the day in English

- History: In the early 1970s Killbuck Elementary had a half day “bilingual kindergarten” for parents who wanted their children taught all in Yup’ik. It arose because of parent interest and in response to the question: "How about making the afternoon class one taught in Yup’ik?" This continued for three years, but did not survive the changes in the school system. In the mid-1980s, concern among Bethel parents led to the establishment of a community committee appointed by the Bethel Advisory School Board. This committee formally requested that:
  - Bethel schools improve their Yup’ik language programs
  - Increasing the number of hours per week for instruction
  - Yup’ik language instruction be made a required subject for K-6
In 1990, a Bilingual Education Task Force was created to assess how the Yup’ik was being taught and made specific recommendations to strengthen the program. The Task Force presented the ASB with a formal request that a total immersion Yup’ik language program be started in Bethel. The report was accepted by the ASB but no action was taken. In 1992, a group of Kuskokwim Campus instructors, parents, and elders began meeting regularly, sharing information about how Eskimo languages are used in the schools of Russia, Alaska, Canada and Greenland.

In 1994, members of the Bethel ASB, including some who had participated actively in the earlier work groups, introduced a formal resolution to establish a Yup’ik immersion program in Bethel in 1995. After much debate – and especially after a large amount of direct parental requests of the ASB – the resolution was passed! In 1994-95-Parents and LKSD Bilingual Department worked at getting ready for the very first Yup’ik language immersion program ever.

In the spring of 1999-Yup’ik Immersion Steering Committee successfully applied for Charter School Status from the Alaska Board of Education. The focus of the application was to provide for comprehensive Yup’ik program autonomy, consolidate under one administration and secure associated charter grants to fund Yup’ik language material development. Parents, teachers, and administration work collaboratively on the planning and implementation of our program.
Culture

- Families spent spring and summer at fish camp, then joined others at village sites for the winter
- Families harvested resources like salmon and seal
- Women’s house - ena
  - Traditionally right next door and were connected by a tunnel to the men’s
- Men’s communal house - qasgiq
  - A place for festivals and ceremonies
- At the houses the men teach boys how to hunt and make tools and women teach girls how to sew and cook
Culture continued…

In Yupik group dances individuals often remain still but move just their upper body and arms rhythmically.

Their gestures are accentuated by hand held dance fans - video: http://www.flickr.com/photos/rebasphotos/2967408212/

Limited motion by no means limits the expressiveness of the dances, which can be gracefully flowing, bursting with energy, and humorous.

The Yupiks are unique among native peoples of the Americas in that children are named after the last person in the community to have died.
Loss of Culture = Loss of Language

Factors contributing to Loss

- Europeans arrived in Yupik territory
- Missionaries persuaded the Yupik people to abandon their religion in favor of Christianity. Christianity was considered universally appropriate.
- School officials and teachers convinced Yupik speakers to give up their own language for English. English was considered universally appropriate.
- Miners in the Yupik territory brought their own influences.
- Many Yupik people moved to cities. Magazines, radio and television influenced a shift in culture.
However, during the twentieth century when Western schools and Christian churches were built, the Yup’ik stopped telling their stories and offering their traditional words of wisdom. Their children were educated in Western languages and ways, and Christian churches taught their children religion; as the last shamans died no-one took their place. As the twenty-first century dawned, however, Yup’ik elders recognized that their lifestyle was almost lost. The elders chose to start sharing their wise words, believing that they have continued relevance and power to change lives. These words of wisdom are now available not only to educate Yup’ik young people and thus continue their culture, but are also offered to all for the benefit of human society around the world.
Yupik culture shifted...

- The Yupik people changed the way they dress, the foods they eat, the housing they live in, and the technology they use to hunt and fish. (materials)
- The Yupik people’s attitudes towards fate, the natural environment, families, and communities changed. (beliefs)
Yupik Villagers Today

- The Yupik people live primarily in extended family groups or small villages.
- The Yupik people now live in wood frame houses with electricity and appliances. They also aluminum motor boats and snow machines to travel.
- Some families have cars, pick-up trucks, and/or ATVs.
- A small number of people still have sled dogs. These dogs are mainly used for recreational racing.
Many of the young Yupik villagers have moved away from traditional foods such as muskrat. They often choose to eat chips, spaghetti, pizza, white bread, and soda.

They also choose to dress in less traditional clothing, favoring more mainstream American styles.
Revitalization Efforts

- The traditional Yupik language is still spoken.
- Some schools promote bilingualism in English and Yupik.
- Agencies exist to preserve the Yupik language.
Alaskan Native Language Center

ANLC was established by the state legislation in 1972.

It is a place for research and documentation of the 20 native languages.

ANLC continues to document, cultivate, and promote those languages as much as possible and thus contribute to their future and to the heritage of all Alaskans.
Sources of Information

- http://www.ankn.uaf/curriculum
- http://www.alaskool.org/languag/central_yupik/yupik.html#info
- www.omniglot.com/writing.yupik.htm