

NORTHERN AND ARCTIC SOCIETIES

Arctic and North. 2025. No. 61. Pp. 154–164.

Original article

UDC 81'272(985)(045)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37482/issn2221-2698.2025.61.185>

Multilingualism in Arctic Cities: Sociolinguistic Aspects of Language Interaction

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Abstract. The article provides a comprehensive analysis of the sociolinguistic aspects of multilingualism in Arctic cities. The research aims to systematize and critically examine existing studies on the peculiarities of language interaction in the context of intensive urbanization in the Arctic. The methodology includes a qualitative content analysis of 74 Russian and international publications from 1980 to 2024, selected from leading scientific literature databases. As a result, key areas of research have been identified: the impact of urbanization and migration on the language situation, the relationship between language and identity, the visual presence of languages in urban space, and the language initiatives and practices of various population groups. The study reveals that urbanization poses risks of linguistic assimilation for indigenous peoples, but also opens up opportunities for revitalizing minority languages and developing new forms of cultural expression. The common patterns and local specifics of language interaction, as well as the factors of preserving and losing linguistic diversity in Arctic cities, are determined. The need for a balanced language policy and planning to support multilingualism as a key component of sustainable development in the Arctic region is substantiated. Prospects for further interdisciplinary research are outlined, considering the dynamic nature of sociolinguistic processes in the Arctic. The results make a significant contribution to the development of Arctic sociolinguistics and can be used to develop evidence-based language policies and planning measures in the circumpolar region.

Keywords: *Arctic, city, urbanization, multilingualism, language interaction, indigenous peoples, minority languages, language revitalization, sustainable development*

Acknowledgments and funding


The research was supported by Russian Science Foundation grant No. 23-28-01318, <https://rscf.ru/project/23-28-01318/>.

Introduction

The Arctic, as a unique geographical region with distinctive natural and climatic conditions and a rich cultural heritage, is attracting increasing attention of researchers in various fields of science, including social sciences and humanities. The development of Arctic territories and their resources challenges the scientific community to comprehensively study the natural and social systems and processes occurring in this region, taking into account the principles of environmental and

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For citation: Danilov I.A. Multilingualism in Arctic Cities: Sociolinguistic Aspects of Language Interaction. *Arktika i Sever* [Arctic and North], 2025, no. 61, pp. 185–199. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37482/issn2221-2698.2025.61.185>

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cultural sustainability. The development of strategic plans for the Arctic requires a deep understanding of the current socio-economic situation, the characteristics of indigenous communities, their historical and cultural heritage, and linguistic diversity, which are an integral part of the global cultural heritage.

One of the key aspects of social life in the Arctic is urbanization and the associated transformation of traditional communities and their linguistic environment. Arctic cities represent a unique sociolinguistic phenomenon characterized by the complex interaction of indigenous and dominant languages. The historically established linguistic diversity of the Arctic region has undergone intensive changes in recent decades under the influence of globalization, industrialization, migration, and other socioeconomic processes. These processes are giving rise to contradictory trends in the development of Arctic cities: on the one hand, industrial growth and population influx, on the other, decline of traditional ways of life and outflow of indigenous peoples.

Studying the linguistic situation in Arctic cities is particularly relevant given the need to find a balance between modernization and preservation of cultural and linguistic heritage, ensuring the sustainable development of Arctic communities in the context of rapid sociocultural change. The urban environment offers new opportunities for intercultural dialogue and the expansion of the linguistic repertoire of Arctic residents, but simultaneously creates risks of linguistic assimilation and loss of indigenous languages. Despite the growing interest of researchers in the problems of linguistic interaction in Arctic cities, many issues related to the functioning and development of multilingualism in the urbanized environment of the Far North remain poorly studied. In particular, such aspects as the dynamics of language contacts and competition in urban spaces, the role of the education system and language policy in supporting multilingualism, and the impact of migration processes on the linguistic landscape of Arctic cities require further research.

This article aims to review and systematize existing Russian and international studies devoted to the sociolinguistic aspects of multilingualism in Arctic cities. The objectives of the article include:

- analyzing theoretical and methodological approaches to studying the linguistic situation in the urbanized environment of the Arctic;
- summarizing empirical data on the functioning of languages in individual Arctic cities;
- identifying general patterns and local characteristics of language interaction in the urban space of the Arctic;
- determining the factors contributing to the preservation or loss of linguistic diversity in the context of urbanization;
- discussing the prospects for the development of multilingualism in Arctic cities and possible research directions.

It should be noted that, despite growing interest among researchers in urban community issues, Arctic cities are still rarely the subject of specific scientific analysis. Difficult natural and climatic conditions, remoteness, and underdeveloped transport infrastructure significantly complicate field research in Arctic cities, which is reflected in the quantity and depth of scientific works on this

topic. Nevertheless, we have attempted to summarize and analyze available Russian and international publications that examine various aspects of language functioning in Arctic urbanization.

Materials and methods

This study is based on a comprehensive interdisciplinary approach, combining methods from sociolinguistics, sociology of science, and related disciplines. The main sources of data for analysis were scientific publications by Russian and international authors devoted to various aspects of language functioning in Arctic cities.

Leading Russian and international scientific literature databases, such as eLIBRARY.RU, Web of Science, Scopus, and Google Scholar, were used to identify relevant publications. The search covered the period from 1980 to 2024, allowing tracing the dynamics of scientific interest in the topic and identifying the most relevant trends in the development of the language situation in Arctic cities.

In total, approximately 150 publications related to the research topic were identified during the search. After analyzing the abstracts and keywords, 74 of the most relevant sources were selected for further consideration, including 32 articles in Russian and 42 — in English. The sample included works based on empirical data (results of field research, sociolinguistic surveys, linguistic landscape analysis, etc.). The selection criteria were: relevance to the research topic; reliance on empirical data; scientific novelty and significance. The research methodology included a qualitative content analysis of the selected publications aimed at identifying key themes, problems, and trends in the development of the language situation in Arctic cities.

Results and discussion

The topic of “urban language” has been developed in sociolinguistic science since the early 20th century. Considering that the stages of its development, methodological approaches and aspects, and the degree of study are analyzed in Russian articles [1, Ayupova L.L.; 2, Khorosheva N.V.; 3, Yunakovskaya A.A.; 4, Erofeeva E.V.; 5, Ismagilova N.V., Mayorova O.A.; 6, Leontovich O.A. et al.] and by foreign researchers [7, Dejmek B.; 8, Gregersen F., Pedersen I.L., Albris J.; 9, Smakman D., Heinrich P.; 10, Dittmar N., Schlobinski P.; 11, Karlander D.; 12, Busse B., Warnke I.H. et al.], we will limit ourselves to reviewing works that examine linguistic issues in Arctic cities. This focus is due to the specific nature of the object of our study — multilingualism in Arctic cities — and the need to take into account the special socio-economic, demographic, and cultural conditions that determine the language situation in the urbanized environment of the Far North.

An analysis of publications devoted to the linguistic issues of Arctic cities has revealed several key areas of research on multilingualism in Arctic cities:

- the impact of urbanization and migration processes on the linguistic situation in the Arctic: a number of scholars, analyzing socioeconomic and demographic changes in the Arctic region, pay particular attention to the preservation of the languages and cultures of indigenous peoples who traditionally inhabited Arctic territories in conditions of intensive urbanization and the influx of non-indigenous people;

- the relationship between language and identity in Arctic cities: in works devoted to the study of language functioning in the urbanized environment of the Arctic, research attention is often focused on analyzing the role of language as one of the main markers that construct ethnic identity and serve as the basis for its preservation in an urban environment;
- the visual presence of languages in the urban space of the Arctic: a significant number of studies focus on the linguistic landscape of Arctic cities, in particular on the use of indigenous languages in public spaces (signs, advertisements, signs, etc.) and their relationship with the dominant official languages;
- language initiatives, ideologies, and practices of various groups of the Arctic urban population: research teams are studying language behavior, attitudes, and perceptions regarding the languages of indigenous peoples and migrants living in Arctic cities, as well as analyzing public initiatives and projects aimed at supporting and developing minority languages in urban spaces.

Thus, research on the language situation in Arctic cities covers a wide range of issues: from the influence of macrosocial processes on the dynamics of language interaction to the characteristics of individual linguistic behavior and ideas about language in various groups of the urban population. Particular attention is paid to the problems of preserving and developing the languages of indigenous peoples of the Arctic in the context of intensive urbanization and linguistic contact with dominant languages.

The following sections provide a more detailed overview of key works and main research findings in each of the identified areas, with a particular focus on those aspects that are most relevant to understanding the specifics of multilingualism in Arctic cities.

The impact of urbanization and migration on the language situation in the Arctic

Studies analyzing the impact of urbanization and migration on the language situation in the Arctic demonstrate the ambiguity and contradictory nature of these processes. On the one hand, the relocation of indigenous peoples from traditional rural settlements to cities poses the threat of losing their ethnic languages and cultural traditions. For example, D. Patrick and G. Budach [13], considering the migration of Inuit to Ottawa, note that changes in residence and sociocultural environment negatively impact the use and preservation of their ethnic language. M. Laruelle [14] also emphasizes that urbanization dramatically transforms the identity of indigenous peoples, accompanied by the loss of their native languages and traditional ecological knowledge.

On the other hand, a number of researchers point to the potential of Arctic cities as spaces for the development of new forms of cultural and linguistic self-expression for Indigenous peoples. M. Rozanova [15], analyzing the processes of adaptation and integration of the Nenets in the urban environment, draws attention to the prospects for the development of ethnic languages in the context of urbanization. M. Laruelle [16] considers the arrival of indigenous peoples in cities as a factor

contributing to the recognition of their cultural and linguistic heritage and the transformation of Arctic cities into postcolonial spaces. At the same time, the author notes the role of labor migrants from abroad in the formation of a more cosmopolitan urban environment.

Of particular interest is the analysis of L. Grenoble [17], who, using the example of the Sakha Republic (Yakutia) and Greenland, describes the complex interaction of urbanization factors, the consequences of colonization and climate change that determine the dynamics of language processes among indigenous peoples of the Arctic. The author convincingly demonstrates that these factors have a significant impact on language shift and well-being. It is noteworthy that the work records an increased interest among representatives of indigenous peoples in their linguistic and cultural heritage, which is reflected in the intensification of various initiatives and projects aimed at preserving and developing minority languages in urban environments.

Thus, urbanization and migration of Arctic indigenous peoples to cities give rise to diverse trends in the development of the language situation. Along with the risks of linguistic assimilation and loss of ethno-cultural identity, urban space offers new opportunities for the revitalization of minority languages. In this context, a pressing task for further research is to find balanced and effective approaches to language policy and planning that would ensure the sustainable development and viability of Arctic indigenous languages in conditions of intensive urbanization.

Interrelationship of language and identity in Arctic cities

Research into the relationship between language and identity in Arctic cities convincingly demonstrates that language plays a key role in the construction and preservation of the ethnic identity of indigenous peoples and migrant communities in the context of urbanization. As a powerful symbolic resource, language allows ethnic groups to express their unique identity, transmit their cultural heritage, and resist assimilation processes in the dominant urban environment. Thus, M. Hoffman and J. Walker [18], examining the linguistic characteristics of representatives of the Chinese and Italian communities in Toronto, demonstrate how ethnic orientation influences the formation of specific features of the English language (pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar), and emphasize the close connections between language, ethnicity, and the urban environment. E. Elias [19], using the example of the Inuit community in Edmonton, analyzes the factors contributing to the preservation and strengthening of ethnic identity in the urban context, paying particular attention to linguistic and cultural aspects.

The work of Z. Varnay makes a significant contribution to the study of the relationship between language and identity of indigenous peoples in Arctic cities. In one of his articles [20], the author uses sociolinguistic interviews with young people in Dudinka to explore ways of constructing ethnic identity through the prism of language practices, attitudes towards languages and participation in language projects. Co-authored with A. Hamori [21], Z. Varnay applies a critical sociolinguistic and discourse analytical approach to analyze the representation of the Nenets, Dolgans, Nganasans, Evenks and Enets on online media platforms, focusing on the relationship between languages,

culture, and identity. In another work, written jointly with S. Szeverényi [22], the researchers examine the activities of organizations, language situation, language use patterns and language attitudes of representatives of the indigenous peoples of the North in Dudinka in the context of studying their ethnic identity.

These studies demonstrate that language is one of the key markers of ethnic identity for indigenous and “newcomer” communities in Arctic cities. Language practices, attitudes and perceptions are closely linked to processes of ethnic self-identification in a multilingual and multicultural urban environment. At the same time, urbanization not only creates risks of language shift and the blurring of ethnic boundaries, but also opens up new opportunities for redefining and rethinking the role of language as a symbolic resource of identity. In this context, it seems appropriate to conduct research aimed at studying the mechanisms of the mutual influence of language and identity in Arctic cities and identifying the factors that contribute to the preservation and development of minority languages as the basis of ethno-cultural identity in the urbanized Arctic.

Visual presence of languages in Arctic urban spaces

Studies of the linguistic landscape of Arctic cities reveal the important role of visual elements such as road and shop signs, advertising texts and public inscriptions in representing the linguistic and cultural diversity of indigenous peoples. M. Daveluy and J. Ferguson [23], analyzing public signs in the Canadian cities of Iqaluit and Kuujuaq, note the coexistence of various fonts and languages, including the use of several graphic systems of the Inuit language. The researchers emphasize that visual elements of the urban environment reflect the specifics of language policy and the cultural identity of the Canadian Inuit.

A number of studies focus on the role of the linguistic landscape in shaping the authentic environment and developing the tourist appeal of cities. M. Moriarty [24], using the example of Dingle in Ireland, demonstrates how the Irish language is mobilized as a valuable resource and tourist commodity, influencing the local economy. M. Olnova [25], studying the linguistic landscape of the city of Kirkenes, reveals the connection between language and the development of the new economy and cooperation between Russia and Norway.

A comparative analysis of the linguistic landscape of northern cities is presented in the work of Z. Durai, C. Horváth and Z. Várnai [26], which examines the role of visual elements in the preservation and expression of the linguistic and cultural diversity of indigenous peoples living in Enontekiö, Dudinka and Khanty-Mansiysk. The authors emphasize the importance of visual multilingualism as a form of communication for Arctic minorities in urban environments.

Studies devoted to the analysis of urbanonyms as an important component of the linguistic landscape are of particular interest. E.N. Egorova, K.A. Tikhonova and I.N. Feldt [27; 28; 29], using the example of the city of Arkhangelsk, reveal the influence of sociocultural situation on the processes of naming urban objects and the role of urbanonyms in shaping the linguistic and cultural environment of the city. R. L. Valijärvi and L. Kahn [30], studying the linguistic landscape of Nuuk,

the capital of Greenland, analyze the representation of West Greenlandic, Danish, and English in public spaces and their connection to language policy and the city's sociocultural dynamics.

In general, studies of the visual presence of languages in Arctic urban spaces emphasize the importance of the linguistic landscape as an indicator of the linguistic situation, a means of expressing cultural identity, and a tool of language policy. Visual elements of the urban environment not only reflect the linguistic and cultural diversity of Arctic communities, but also actively contribute to the formation of the symbolic value of minority languages and their mobilization as an economic and tourist resource. Promising tasks include identifying the role of the linguistic landscape in the revitalization and support of the languages of the indigenous peoples of the Arctic and studying the dynamics of the visual presence of languages in the context of globalization and the development of new technologies.

Language initiatives, ideologies and practices of various groups of the Arctic urban population

Studies analyzing the language initiatives, ideologies, and practices of various groups of the Arctic urban population demonstrate the complex interrelationships between sociocultural, psychological, and historical factors influencing the linguistic behavior and attitudes of urban residents. For example, T. Owens and P. Baker [31], studying the problems of language insecurity among the population of the Canadian city of Winnipeg, analyze the connection between psychological and sociocultural aspects and feelings of uncertainty in using Canadian English in a multilingual environment.

A number of studies focus on the role of language initiatives and programs implemented by indigenous peoples themselves in preserving and developing ethnic languages and cultures in urban environments. Using the example of urban Inuit in Ottawa, D. Patrick and J. Tomiak [32] demonstrate the importance of community-driven language and culture development programs for creating a sense of community and expanding access to employment and services in the city. D. Patrick, G. Budach and I. Muckpaloo [33], drawing on their experience of implementing a literacy project among the Inuit of Ottawa, describe the potential of such initiatives as a driving force for family language policies aimed at preserving and developing linguistic traditions.

Studies devoted to the analysis of new language practices and their role in constructing the identity of urban youth are of particular interest. For example, P. Quist and B. Svendsen [34], applying a multi-level approach to the study of language practices in Scandinavian cities, conduct a structural and phonological analysis of innovative language forms, examine their perception by city residents, and discuss the role of language in the formation of youth identity.

Researchers are also addressing the issues of integrating the languages and cultures of migrants into the urban space of the Arctic. In this regard, the study of P. McDermott [35] is of interest. Analyzing the situation of migrant languages in Belfast and Derry / Londonderry, he pays particular attention to describing the interactions of migrants with the local population and the role of cultural spaces in the processes of linguistic and cultural integration.

Studies devoted to the analysis of linguistic ideologies and attitudes in the context of language change deserve special attention. D. Morgunova-Schwalbe [36], comparing the stability of the Yupik language in the town of Gambell in Alaska and in the Russian-speaking village of Novoe Chaplino in the Far East of Russia, focuses on the study of linguistic ideologies and the attitudes of native speakers toward language change.

Thus, studies of language initiatives, ideologies, and practices of various groups of the urban population of the Arctic reveal a diversity of factors influencing linguistic behavior and attitudes in the context of urbanization and language contact. Of particular importance are the initiatives of indigenous peoples and migrants themselves to preserve and develop their native languages and cultures, as well as the role of urban cultural spaces in the processes of linguistic and cultural integration. In this regard, research is required to reveal the significance and characteristics of the mechanisms of formation and transformation of linguistic ideologies and practices in the context of Arctic urbanization, as well as the potential of “bottom-up” language initiatives in the revitalization of minority languages.

Special monitoring studies conducted by the Ob-Ugric Institute of Applied Researches and Development in the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug – Yugra make a significant contribution to the study of the functioning of the languages of the indigenous peoples of the North in the context of urbanization. The works of A.A. Galyamov [37–39], devoted to the analysis of the language situation in the cities of Surgut and Khanty-Mansiysk, focus on describing the language preferences and level of native language proficiency among representatives of the indigenous peoples of the North. These studies provide a detailed overview of the linguistic behavior and attitudes of the urban population and identify factors influencing the preservation and development of minority languages in an urbanized environment.

Another important aspect of studying the language situation in the cities of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug – Yugra is the analysis of the linguistic attitudes of the indigenous peoples of the North in the field of ethno-cultural education. An article by S.Kh. Khaknazarov [40], devoted to the study of this issue using the cities of Kogalym and Langepas as examples, makes a valuable contribution to understanding the role of educational institutions in shaping the linguistic ideologies and practices of the urban population.

It should be noted that the regular nature of monitoring studies conducted by the Ob-Ugric Institute allows not only to record the current state of the language situation, but also to track the dynamics of linguistic processes in the cities of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug – Yugra over a long period. These data can serve as a basis for the development of effective language policy and planning measures aimed at supporting and revitalizing the languages of the indigenous peoples of the North in the context of urbanization. Overall, specialized monitoring studies of the functioning of the languages of indigenous peoples of the North in the cities of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug – Yugra make a significant contribution to the development of Arctic sociolinguistics and can

serve as an example for organizing similar research in other regions of the Russian and international Arctic.

Conclusion

The review and systematization of studies devoted to the sociolinguistic aspects of multilingualism in Arctic cities allow us to draw a number of conclusions. First of all, it should be noted that the study of the linguistic situation in the urbanized Arctic environment is based on a comprehensive interdisciplinary approach that combines methods of sociolinguistics, urban studies, anthropology and related disciplines. The theoretical and methodological basis of the research consists of the concepts of language shift, language ecology, language landscape, and critical sociolinguistics.

Empirical data on individual Arctic cities reveal the complex dynamics of linguistic interaction, conditioned by the influence of urbanization, migration, globalization, and industrialization. Despite the risks of linguistic assimilation and the loss of indigenous languages, urbanization simultaneously creates the conditions for their revitalization and the development of new forms of ethno-cultural self-expression. Although there are local specifics, the functioning of languages in the urban space of the Arctic is characterized by a number of common patterns, such as a reduction in the use of minority languages, an increase in linguistic diversity due to both internal and external migration, activation of “bottom-up” language initiatives, and transformation of linguistic ideologies and practices in the context of multiculturalism.

The key factors in preserving linguistic diversity in Arctic cities include institutional support and linguistic loyalty of native speakers, as well as mobilization of language as a cultural and economic resource. At the same time, assimilation processes, the limited use of minority languages, and the declining linguistic competence of the younger generation are factors contributing to language loss. The prospects for the development of multilingualism in Arctic cities are linked to the implementation of balanced language policies and planning aimed at supporting and revitalizing the languages of indigenous peoples, expanding the functionality of minority languages in the public sphere, and shaping attitudes towards the value of linguistic diversity.

As the analysis demonstrates, only a comprehensive, interdisciplinary approach to this issue, based on a combination of sociolinguistic analysis with methods from urban studies, anthropology, geography, and other disciplines, will make it possible to develop scientifically sound recommendations for the preservation and development of linguistic diversity as a key component of sustainable development in the Arctic region in the context of rapid socio-cultural change. A comparative study of linguistic situations in different Arctic cities will help to identify universal patterns and local specifics of linguistic interaction and to develop effective models and indicators for assessing multilingualism in the urbanized Arctic environment.

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*The article was submitted 11.11.2024; approved after reviewing 13.11.2024;
accepted for publication 14.11.2024*

The author declares no conflicts of interest, including those related to financial support from the Russian Science Foundation (Grant No. 23-28-01318)