81

TATAR LANGUAGE: TENDENCIES OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN POLYETHNIC SOCIETY (CASE STUDY OF RUSSIA AND KAZAKHSTAN)

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Abstract: Conservation and development of minority languages in countries unique in the ethno-linguistic aspect, such as Russia and Kazakhstan, are highly relevant. Wide linguistic diversity, on the one hand, and dominance of the official Russian in Russia and the official Kazakh and Russian languages in the socio-communicative system of society in Kazakhstan, on the other hand, determine the linguistic landscape and peculiarities of multilingualism in these states. Research interest in linguistic contacts of a modern multiethnic society has determined the choice of the processes of linguistic and ethnic identification, related issues of conservation and using the native language and culture by representatives of various ethnic groups living in Russia and Kazakhstan, as well as the specifics of their interaction and mutual influence under new geopolitical conditions as the object of the study.

Keywords: ethnos, minority language, language consciousness, conservation, Tatar language, multicultural society, Russia, Kazakhstan

Introduction

Development of a rational and appropriate language policy in a modern multicultural and multilingual

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societyturns out to be a challenge. One of the main conditions for a successful language policy is in-depth consideration of two opposing trends: on the one hand, maintaining the official language, and on the other hand, supporting and developing others, including languages ofminorities.

Kazakhstan and Russia are historically multiethnic, multilingual and multicultural states.The uniqueness of their ethno-lingual environment is based onwide linguistic diversity: dominance of the official Kazakh and Russian languages in the social and communicative system of Kazakh society; dominance of the Russian language on the territory of the Russian Federation.

All aforementioned makes quite obvious the relevance of the case study of minority languages interaction in multicultural societies (Kazakhstan and Russia); identifying factors of language conservation and features of functioning, as well as co-functioning with the dominant languages (Kazakh and Russian) in social and communicative environment of these countries; linguistic and ethnic identification in a polyethnic language landscape.

According to Federal State Statistics Service of the Russian Federation, the total population of Russia as of January 1, 2019, is 146,781,095 people [1]. As of the 2010 National Census, the number of Tatars is 5,310,649 people that is 3.72% of the Russian population.

The Republic of Tatarstan is one of the most multinational regions of Russia. Its inhabitants are mainly Tatars (over 2 million or 53.2% of the total population of the Republic) followed by Russians (over 1.5 million or 39.7%) and Chuvashes (116.2 thousand or 3.1%) [2].

As of January 1, 2019, the population of Kazakhstan is 18,395,567 people, including the following ethnic groups: Kazakhs who make up the majority of the population - 12,505,251 (67.98%), Russians – 3,553,232 (19.32%), Uzbeks (3. 21%), Ukrainians (1.47%), Uighurs (1.475), Tatars – 201,492 (1.10%), etc. [3,13, 14].

According to the 2009 Census, 104.2 thousand Tatars (51.1%) indicated Tatar as their mother tongue, about 100 thousand (48.9%) mentioned other languages [4,11,12]. These data correlate with the results of two large-scale studies conducted under the supervision of Prof.

E.D. Suleymenova (INTAS project "New language identity in transforming societies: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan" (2005) and the project of the Committee on Language Development and Socio-Political Work of the Ministry of Culture and Sport of the Republic of Kazakhstan "Ethno-Linguistic Landscape in the Republic of Kazakhstan: the Present and the Future" (2009)). As follows from the projects, comparison of the data obtained within a five-year interval (2005 and 2009) demonstrate a correlation between the ethnic and linguistic identity of the Tatar respondents: an ethnic language – 70% → 40%; the Kazakh language – 13% → 40%; the Russian language – 9% → 0%; the ethnic language + Russian – 1% → 20%; other languages – 5% → 0%. The revealed relation of linguistic identity and linguistic competence also indicates the presence of a language shift [5, p. 284]. Researchers from Kazan Federal University investigated the language situation in Tatar diasporas of different countries [6-10].

Methods

The study is based on experimental setup (a survey, an association experiment and interviewing of various ethnic groups representatives). The article presents the results of the survey conducted among Tatar respondents in the Russian Federation (100 people; Moscow, Kazan, Nizhny Novgorod region, etc., 2017-2018) and in Kazakhstan (100 people; Astana, Almaty, Semey, Pavlodar, etc., 2016-2017).

200 people took part in the survey. Mathematical data processing was performed by SPSS Statistics program.

The survey is aimed at studying the processes of ethnic and linguistic identification, specific national features of the world perception, interaction of minority languages with Kazakh, Russian and other languages, engagement and mutual influence of the language consciousness of ethnic groups in a multicultural and multilingual Russian and Kazakh societies.

Results and discussion

The following statements were used to evaluate passive language skills: *b) I understand speech but I cannot communicate*, *c) I understand speech and I can produce some basic phrases*.

84

The statements to measure the level of active proficiency were as follows*: d) I understand speech, speak and read fluently but I cannot write; e) I understand, speak, read and write fluently*. It was possible to indicate the ignorance of the language through an option *a) I do not have a command of the language.*

The obtained results on the level of language competence of Tatar respondents from Russia and Kazakhstan are shown in Table 1.

Table 1–Language competence of respondents-Tatars (%)

Levels of proficiency	Respondents – Russian Federation citizens		Respondents – Kazakhstan citizens		
	Tatar language	Russian language	Tatar language	Kazakh language	Russian language
I do not have a command of the language	–	–	12,0	6	–
Can understand speech but cannot communicate	2,0	–	14,0	23,0	–
Can understand speech and can produce basic phrases	13,0	1,3	25,0	33,0	1,0
Can understand speech; speak and read fluently; cannot write	16,0	3,7	24,0	14,0	3,0
Can understand speech; speak, read and write fluently	69,0	93,0	25,0	24,0	96,0

In general, command of the Tatar language among Tatar respondents living in Russia is quite good: the index of active proficiency in the ethnic language is 85%; 69% are fluent speakers. Moreover, the "zero" level (ignorance) of the ethnic language among the Tatars from Russia was not revealed. Tatar respondents from Kazakhstan have demonstrated lower results: active command of the ethnic language is 49%; the level of fluency is 25%. 39% respondents indicated passive language skills. Ignorance of the ethnic language was also noted (12%).

The findings of the study emerge dominance of bilingual Tatars (as in the case with the threshold index "I can understand speech and produce basic phrases"): in Russia 99% respondents have different levels of proficiency in the ethnic language and 96% are fluent in Russian; in Kazakhstan 74% respondents are proficient in Tatar, 71% respondents have different levels of proficiency in the official Kazakh language, 93% are fluent in Russian.

Distribution of the Tatar language in public communication can be characterized by identifying the qualitative level of social functions. Findings on the use of Tatar, Russian and Kazakh languages in various fields of activity by respondents-Tatars living in Russia and Kazakhstan indicate dominance of the Russian language in almost all spheres of their life (Table 2).

Table 2 – The use of Tatar, Russian and Kazakh languages in various communication areas by respondents-Tatars (%)

Languages	Respondents – Russian Federation citizens			
	At work (for academic purposes)	In the family	In the street	Mass media
Tatar language	28%	41%	11%	20%
Russian language	72%	44%	96%	87%

	Respondents – Kazakhstan citizens			
Tatar language	5%	34%	2%	17%
Russian language	89%	87%	93%	86%
Kazakh language	42,0	15,0	40,0	27,0

According to the results of the survey, 25% Tatars from Russia use the language of their ethnic group in all communicative situations while Russian is used by 75% respondents. Tatar language is used at work (for academic purposes) by 28% although the majority of respondents study at academic institutions with Tatar as a language of instruction. Russian is also dominant when choosing the language for information sourcing (cf.: 87% - Russian, 20% - Tatar).

Values of the active use (*always, often*) of the Tatar language by respondents from Kazakhstan are presented in descending order: in the family - 34%, mass media - 17%; at work, for academic purposes - 5.0%, in the street and at transport – 2.0%. Domains of active use of the official language are the following: at work (for academic purposes) - 42%; in the street and at transport - 40%; mass media - 27%; in the family - 15%.

Therefore, family relations are a sphere where Tatar as a minority language is preserved to the utmost in multicultural societies of Russia and Kazakhstan.

In this regard, the results of the free association experiment on the *family hearth* stimulus conducted among Tatars of Kazakhstan and Russia, divided into three age groups, are of great interest. The concept of family hearth is one of the key culture concepts, a pillar of the national identity. The most important notions of the material and spiritual world of the ethnos are concentrated in vocabulary representing this concept.

The conducted association experiment highlights six significant characteristics of the word-stimulus *family hearth*: 1. housing; 2. fire; 3.

family relationships; 4. home; 5. homeland; 6. mode of life.

Let us consider the responses to the *family hearth* stimulus given by an ethno-cultural group of Tatars from Kazakhstan. The associations are divided into groups of common, significant associations for all three age groups and specific ones that have occurred due to various cultural and social reasons (Table 3).

Family hearth is associated primarily with family, home, parents and comfort. In addition, respondents from the second age group demonstrate a sense of responsibility towards the family in the series of their associations. Family hearth implies that responsibilities are already assigned to each member of the social group. The answers also show generic relations (parents, father, mother, wife, children) since the family hearth is, first of all, a generic bond that is held together with common blood and a common surname (in this case, *the Sitdinovs*). The lexeme *dastarkhan* (from Kazakh *meals, treat*) is of particular importance. It characterizes the attitude towards the state the respondent lives in.

Table 3 − Associations of Tatar respondents living in Kazakhstan on the word stimulus *family hearth*

1st age group	2nd age group	3rd age group
family (7), home (5), comfort (5), mother (3), abi (*grandmother in Tatar*) (2), parents (2), warmth (2), fireplace, fire, food, happy family, babay (*grandfather in Tatar*), Homeland, father.	comfort (5), family (4), mother (3), home (3), warmth (2), wife (2), children (2), love, the Sitdinovs, parents, circle, kept by a woman, joy, fireplace, responsibilities, evenness.	family (6), comfort (4), love (2), mother, children, home, table, welfare, roof over the warm corner, happiness, wife, togetherness, corner, mutual understanding, dastarkhan (*meals and treats in Kazakh*).

The observed association of *homeland* can be connected with both the new homeland (Kazakhstan) and the historical homeland (Tatarstan) by a complex system of relations, which leads to the conceptualization of concepts. Homeland for the respondent begins with a family hearth, kinship and comfort. Proximity to the historical homeland and to the native language is also manifested through associations in the Tatar language, although they are of a single character: *abi* (*grandmother* in Tatar), *babay* (*grandfather* in Tatar). They further emphasize ethnic identity and the desire for preserving the native language. It is important to note that native speakers of the Tatar language in Kazakhstan today are mostly the older generation. Representatives of the first and second age groups practically do not have a command of Tatar. The answers of the Tatar respondents, citizens of the Russian Federation are different (Table 4).

Table 4 − Associations of Tatar respondents living in Russia on the word stimulus *family hearth*

1st age group	2nd age group	3rd age group
Abi (*grandmother in Tatar*) (11), home comfort (6), loyalty (4), warmth (4), nearest and dearest (3), coziness (3), children (2), happiness (2), fireplace, parents, love, mother, sadness, marriage, tea, get-togethers around the fireplace.	Abi (*grandmother in Tatar*) (14), family (6), warmth (5), support (2), comfort (2), happiness (2), fidelity, mutual understanding; it unites the family; harmony.	Warmth (4), respect (3), mutual understanding (3), stove (3), care (2), comfort (2), parents, kinship, home, love, children, a large family.

In general, responses to the word-stimulus are represented by the same categories as the responses of Kazakhstan respondents. Particularly, they are family relationships and home atmosphere. As a matter of interest, the reaction *mother* was not presented, but its Tatar equivalent *abi* had a high frequency. Particularly significant associations are mutual understanding, love, family unity, a large family, etc. – notably, the values that characterize the traditions and mentality of the ethnic group. We also observe a specific response *fire* which waspresented not as the flame but indirectly - *the stove, the fireplace, get-togethers around the fireplace*. This appears to witness the state of comfort.

The study showed that the stereotypical nature of the analyzed stimulus word *family hearth* in Kazakhstan is more vividly expressed than in Russia. Our conclusions are based on the number of core signs of the concepts, their brightness index as well

as the capacity of the near peripheral zones.

Summary

Indexes of language competence on active and passive language skills were identified based on a comparative analysis of experimental findings on the level of proficiency in Kazakh, Russian and ethnic languages among the Tatars living in Kazakhstan and Russia. First of all, the high level of Russian language competence and dominance of the Russian language in almost all areas of activity of Tatars should be noted: the level of fluency in Russian among Tatar respondents from Russia is 96%, from Kazakhstan - 93%. 38% of the interviewed Tatars in Kazakhstan indicated an active command of the official Kazakh language.

The level of proficiency in the ethnic language by respondents from Russia - citizens of the Republic of Tatarstan is higher than among respondents from Kazakhstan, which can be adequately explained. The index of active command of the Tatar language among Tatar respondents from Russia is 85%, including 69% fluent speakers. The

90

corresponding index among Tatar respondents from Kazakhstan is 49%, with only 25% of the fluent speakers.

Functional capabilities of the ethnic language are demonstrated by the data on its use in significant areas of communication. Despite the relatively high level of ethnic linguistic competence of Tatar respondents from Russia, the Tatar language is most frequently used in the family (41%). The results of the survey of Tatars from Kazakhstan indicate that the sphere of the most frequent use of the Tatar language is also the family (34%).

The findings on command and use of the official Kazakh language demonstrate an increase in the Kazakh language competence of Tatar respondents (in the street, at transport - 40%; at work, for academic purposes - 42%; mass media - 27%).

As shown by the results of the survey, conceptualization and stereotyping of concepts are influenced by historical and cultural characteristics of ethnic groups. Macro-ethnos (Kazakhs) has significant influence on the content of the concept sphere of Kazakhstan citizens. It is manifested in

the use of vocabulary that presents special basic concepts of Kazakh culture.

Changes in the language consciousness of the Tatar respondents in Russia are also associated with the influence of macro-ethnos (Russians) on the minority (Tatars), since the respondents scarcely used associations typical for Tatar culture. Their reactions included categories similar in meaning to the ones of Russian language consciousness. Few reactions of the bilingual worldview from representatives of the Tatar nationality living in Russia were associations of the genetic and mental level: *abi, babay*. These changes are reflected only in the peripheral zones of the concept structure, the core components remain intact.

Conclusions

The study findingsconfirm that, despite the emerging trends of the language shift, the respondents demonstrate a desire fordefining their own ethnicity and the role of the native language as the most important symbol of an ethnos. The state provides all-round support for it.

The study of the processes of ethnic and language identification in the

context of the new language policy is highly relevant, since it provides an opportunity to identify a range of problematic issues caused both by previous periods in the country's history and by the socio-political and economic challenges of our time. The solution of these problems is crucial for sustainable development of countries, further implementation of peaceful coexistence of minorities living in Russia and Kazakhstan, conservation and development of their languages.

Acknowledgements

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