

NATIONAL LANGUAGE AS REPUBLICAN POLITIC AND THE LANGUAGE PREFERENCES OF THE STUDENTS IN REPUBLIC OF TUVA

В статье, основываясь на социологическом подходе к языковому вопросу, обсуждается вопрос развития тувинского национального языка и языковых предпочтений молодежи республики Тува.

Ключевые слова:

национальная идентичность молодежи, Сибирь, Тува, языковая политика.

G. Williams in his study (The Knowledge Economy, Language and Culture 2010) provides a sociological outlook on the issue of language and examines the role of language and culture in economic activity. For G. Williams, language is an integrative issue, which deeply affects group relations and the problem of status (in labor process, in the changing structure of economy and governance, the interaction of nation state and globalization) [13].

Parallel to the issue of language and status, P. Bourdieu in his study underlines the social value of language and its symbolic power [4, p. 52]. By disclosing the underlying relationship between language and power politics within a territory P. Bourdieu emphasizes on how language turns out to be a means of power for authority and how it is used by individuals seeking their own interests [4, p. 44–46].

As language plays a key role on social, economic and political issues, the languages spoken in certain territories are also affected by social, economic and political changes in the form of language death or language shift. Language death occurs when the language totally disappears as a means of communication [3, c.150]. Campbell defines language death by emphasizing on the process and uses the phrase “gradual shift” in order to explain the conversion from one language to the other [8, c.ix]. Language shift occurs within bilingual or multilingual social structures where two communities come into contact. As a result of this contact, speakers of one language gradually “shift” to use the other language for an increasing number of functions [3, p. 151].

G. Williams evaluates language vitality under three headings: 1. The status of a spoken language within society. For G. Williams status is examined from the perspective of three main areas; economic, social and socio-historical. 2. Demography, which plays an important role on the vitality of spoken language in the society. According to G. Williams national territory, demographic concentration and proportion, birth rate, mixed marriages and immigration

and emigration stabilities are essential sine qua nons for the demographic preeminence. 3. Institutional support through mass media, education, governmental services, industry, religion and culture [13, p. 201].

On the other hand several factors undermine the language vitality and cause a language shift:

Functional decrease of language is one of these factors. This may appear in the form of encroachment of the dominant language in the society by challenging the official, public functions of the native language, the dominant language then ousts the native language from the social and interpersonal function. In the end the native language is suppressed into being only the language of home. The decrease in the number of native language speakers in the society and the decrease of the fluency of the speakers, which speak the native language, is another factor affecting language shift. The last of these factors that influences language shift is the presence of rememberers, who had forgotten their linguistic ability.

In the following sections of this article the language issue in Tuva will be assessed through this theoretical viewpoint first by focusing on the demography and its relationship to language and then the status of the Tuvan language in the political and social spheres. Finally the problem of language shift will be discussed through the findings of our field research, conducted in Tuva in 2010.

The Tuvan population has increased from 57% [2; 19] to 82% [21] between 1959 and 2010. The Russian population, however, has decreased from 40.1% [2] to 16.27% [20] within the same time period. The Tuvan population growth has triggered a change in the demographic balance in favour of the urban population against the rural. Between the years 1959–2010 tremendous migration flow was observed from rural areas to urban districts. Between 1959 and 2012 the population rate in the cities increased from 29.2% [6] to 53.6% [22]. In the general population the number of Russian speakers also increased. At the same time,

parallel to the increasing urban population the percentage of bilingualism among Tuvans had increased as well. In 1989 only 58% of the Tuvan population spoke the Russian language [12, p. 178]. B. C. Dongak, however, found in 2002 that the Russian speaking Tuvan population increased to 82.5% in her study conducted with university students and added that as the popularity of the Russian language increased among Tuvan youths, 2.5% of the Tuvan subjects living in Tuvan cities, emphasized that they were insufficient in the Tuvan language [5, p. 506].

It can be argued from the statistical data that urban districts developed into places, which connected people within a federative structure. Furthermore as this demographic shift intensified the process of integration with the Federal Government also intensified, making the Russian language a priority for the native people. In other words the Russian language not only gained the status of international communication, but also became a means of improving social status resulting in better education and better job opportunities. This condition made the development of the Tuvan language problematic. In addition to the demographic evaluation above future outcomes of the politics of the already ratified regional consolidation have to be considered. One of these outcomes is that Tuva will not only be consolidated as an administrative region of the Republic of Hakasya and the Krasnoyarsk region, but also will be connected to the region with a railway complying with the framework of the economic consolidation [7; 9]. Hence this new railway will be used to transport raw materials but more importantly it is expected that the railway will trigger a Russian speaking migration to Tuva. The rationalization project would increase the integration and negatively affect the status of the Tuvan language.

Right after the independence of Peoples Republic of Tannu – Tuva in 1921 the project of construction of the national language, its standardization and grammatical codification had gained priority in the newly established nation state. At the end of this process Tuvan literature language was promoted to state language and it was used in every area from education to official communication.

However, in 1944 after the unification with the Soviet Union and increasing Russian population in Tuva the Russian language penetrated into the Tuvan language sphere. Tuva became an administrative part of the Soviet Union and the Russian language became the state language. This meant that all of the official documents (official letters, decrees, di-

rectives, records) political and other activities (meetings, congress, conferences, and declarations) were written in both Russian and Tuvan languages. Although under the Soviet administration the Tuvan language was officially among the state languages of Tuvan SSR and the number of Tuvan national schools were increased, Tuva entered into the influence of Russian language.

However in the late 80s the question of improvement of the status of titular languages had become an important issue for the national elites of every federal republic in the Soviet Union. In the context of national revitalization movements in the early 1990's each federal republic took necessary initiatives in order to promote the status of the language of their titular nation to state language.

In 1990 the language law was ratified parallel to the rise of the political movements for the rehabilitation of titular languages in the Soviet Union. Within the framework of this legislative restructuring, not only was the Russian language ratified as the state language, but also incase of demand titular languages of the federative republics were allowed to acquire the status of state language. As a result, each republic had two state languages; the titular language of the republic and Russian as the all-federative language. With this legislative act bilingualism acquired juridical, legal character [16].

At the beginning of the transformation period, like all other national republics in the Soviet Union, in Tuva the question of rehabilitation of national language existed as a significant issue for national elite.

On the problem of rehabilitation of national language two opposing opinions arose [14]. According to one claim there should be two state languages: Russian and Tuvan. The other claim argued that only Tuvan, should be the state language, as two state languages would hinder the development of the Tuvan language.

According to S.I. Ilenkov two state languages do not offer vitalization in the field of national identity. Ch. K. Ajur-Saiaa claims that for the future of a national language the state language must be Tuvan. He assumed that the case of the implementation of two state languages, the Tuvan language would lose its status in the Tuvan society.

Parallel to these ideas, Ch. K. Ajur-Saiaa, V.U. Homushku assumes that the acceptance of two state languages would not lead to the development of the Tuvan language. Consequently the problem of the Tuvan language would not be solved. In order to deal with this issue V.U. Homushku proposed two con-

cepts: “state language” and “the language of international communication”. According to this idea the Tuvan language would be the state language and the Russian language would be the language of international communication.

In contrast to these ideas, E.S. Dongak proposed a different terminology: “state language” and “official language”. According to E.S. Dongak Tuvan should be the state language and Russian should be recognized as the official language.

Deputat RSFSR K.S. Bchekdey defines the terms “state language” and “official language” as follows: State language has state protection and support, on the other hand, official language is the language, which is generally used within a certain territory, it is the language of office.

As opposed to the state languages, official language does not have state borders. It is used in various countries. K.S. Bchekdey continues his argument that the Russian language as a state language is wide spread in the territory of the Russian Federation. The Tuvan language like “Russian language” is also the language of the territory of Tuva. For this reason the Tuvan language needs state protection.

On the other hand, the general idea of the supporters of two state languages concentrated on the assumption that the social structure of the society made it necessary for two state languages.

Ch.D.B. Ondar focuses on communication and argues that both Tuvan and Russian should be state languages since Russian is the means of international communication.

In addition to the idea of Ch.D.B. Ondar, A.P. Sumenkov, points out that allocating roles to languages and making a division between state and official language may led to negative consequences.

Consequently, after prolonged negotiations the Tuvan language law was passed in 1991, in accordance with to the law of language RSFSR 1990. Tuvan language became the language of state and acquired juridical status in different social shears and the Russian language was recognized as the official language (Although the law was ratified in action in 1991, some chapters or several points of the articles of the language law have been changed in the time period from 1 March 1993 to 1 January 1994, 1 March 1996 and 1 January 2001 [12, p. 176].

The first article of the law of language maintains that Tuvan is the state language of Tuva ASSR. The necessary resources and personal were recruited for the progress of the Tuvan language to develop its functions and expand its usage.

Besides strengthening the general provisions of the Tuva language, the law «On languages in Tuva ASSR» had strengthened the function of the Tuvan language in government, management, public organizations and in the enterprises. Within this framework Article 5. of the law affirms that together with Russian, the Tuvan language exist as a language of office-work in government and management of law enforcement bodies, public organizations and collectives enterprises in Tuva ASSR. The law also asserts that all documents of the government and administration must be published in both Russian and Tuvan languages. Accordingly congresses sessions, conferences, plenums, assemblies, meetings and seminars, other political and scientific actions were to be conducted in Russian, and in the Tuvan languages. All state office-work, including financial and technical documentation, answers to complaints and applications were organized in the Russian and Tuvan languages.

The law «On languages in Tuva ASSR» also strengthened the position of the Tuva language in areas of formation, science, culture and mass media.

The law not only guaranteed the right of a voluntary choice of language in education, but also guaranteed the use of the Tuvan language in cultural and sporting events.

The law also affirmed that traditional, geographical, administrative – territorial names of locations were kept in its original Tuvan form. Besides this, names of settlements, areas, streets, establishments, official press or marks would be written in the Tuva language.

The law «On languages in Tuva ASSR» not only kept and protected the function of the Tuvan language in the Tuvan society, but also controlled and ensured the implementation of the law [18].

Also with the implementation of the Language Law the use of Tuvan was extended to the public sphere. One of social areas in which the Tuvan language was actively used was the area of mass media. In 1996 four radio programs (Kara-Dash, Volna, Ulug-Hem, Kyzylstero) and three television programs (Uraanhaj, Tyva, Tuva-Tv) were broadcasted in the republic. Moreover various magazines, national or regional newspapers were published in the Tuvan language [1, p. 65–66].

The Tuva language became active in the field of education. The quantity of education in the Tuvan national schools increased. Tuvan Language classes were offered to students in Russian schools, kindergarten, secondary education and college [15; 17; 19].

Subjects such as Tuvan language and the literature, history and geography of Tuva were

included in the new curriculum. National schools were provided with new textbooks of in the Tuvan language [15; 17; 19].

However in the year 2003 the Tuvan constitution was amended and according to the new version the Russian language was ratified as state language alongside Tuvan [10]. Hence, like the language situation in the other federative republics of the Russian Federation, in the republic of Tuva bilingualism acquired juridical, legal status at the level of the constitution.

Related to the problem of the language issue in Tuva, in October 2010 we conducted a sociological survey with 242 university students at Tuvan State University on how language policy affected the language preferences of Tuvan youths in Tuva. Within this perspective subjects were asked six contradictory questions.

In the first two questions were about the students' native language and its level of fluency. The aim of these questions was to understand whether there was a contradiction between the affirmation of native language and their levels of fluency. In this context first the student was asked what his/her native language was then the student was asked which language he/she was better in.

As is seen from the tables there was no disagreement between the rate of affirmation of native language and its level of fluency. While 97.5% students affirmed that Tuvan was their native language, 73,5% students affirm that they were better at using the Tuvan language and 16,11% affirm that they are good at both Tuvan and Russian languages. Only 17 students out of 236 affirmed that they are better at Russian,

Next students were asked which language was spoken at home and then they were asked in which language they received their education.

As seen from the tables, answers of the third and the fourth questions were in disagreement. While 88,4% of the students spoke Tuvan at home, 90,4% of the students affirmed that they received education in the Russian language. This data revealed that while the Tuvan language was preferred at home, the Russian language was the language of education.

The last two questions were about their opinion on language preferences at home and in education. The students were asked which language they would prefer their children to speak, and in which language they would prefer their children to receive education.

While only 78 out of 242 students preferred their children to speak only in the Tuvan language, 163 out of 242 students preferred their

«Specifying the native language?»

Out of 242 participants

236 students	97.52%	Tuvan language
5 students	2.06%	Russian language
1 student	0.413%	Mongolian language

Table 2

«Which language do you speak better?»

Out of 242 participants

22 students	9,09%	Russian language
178 students	73,55%	Tuvan language
39 students	16,11%	Russian and Tuvan language
1 student	0,423%	Russian and Tuvan and an other language

Table 3

«Which language do you speak in the family?»

Out of 242 participants

214 students	88,429%	In Tuvan language
7 students	2,892%	In Russian language
1 student	0,413%	In Mongolian language
19 students	7,851%	In Russian and Tuvan language
1 student	0,413%	In Tuvan and Mongolian language
1 student	0,413%	In Tuvan, Russian and Mongolian language

Table 4

«In which language have you received your education?»

Out of 242 participants

214 students	90,495%	In Russian language
5 students	2,066%	In Tuvan language
3 student	1,239%	In an other language
11 students	4,545%	In Russian and Tuvan language
1 student	0,413%	In Russian and other language
4 student	1,652%	In Russian and other language

Table 5

«In which language would you prefer your children to speak?»

Out of 242 participants

72 students	29,752%	In Russian language
78 students	32,231%	In Tuvan language
11 student	4,545%	In an other language (Chinese or English)
42 students	17,355%	In Russian and Tuvan language
12 student	4,958%	In Russian and other language language
13 student	5,351%	In Russian, Tuvan and other language

142 children to receive their education in Russian.

These contradictions demonstrate how social needs affect the language preferences of the students.

Another important result of our analysis was that although 97,52% of the students affirmed that Tuvan was their native language, 67,355% of these students affirmed that they wanted their children to receive their education in Russian. On the other hand the percentage of students who preferred their children to have their education in Tuvan dropped to 32,231%.

In addition the demands of education in foreign languages like English, Chinese and Japanese is another factor, which should be taken into consideration.

On the other hand, when the results of our findings is compared with the findings of other researches we have reached the following conclusions:

In 2001 a Tuvan sociologist V.S Dongak found that the Tuvan language was the most important symbol of the Tuvan identity.

In 2010, however, we received controversial results through our research findings on the mandatory condition for the existence of Tuvan ethnoses. According to our results national customs were mandatory condition for the existence of Tuvan ethnoses. From these results we are asserting that during the process of transformation the place of language as the symbol of ethnic identity lost its position to national customs.

On the other hand, the answers of the parents in 2002 [11] and the answers of the students in 2010, in our study, on the preference of which language children should speak strongly differentiated. The preference of Tuvan language decreased from 61,74% to 32,231%. This means that while in 2002 61–74% of the parents of children (preschool and school) affirmed the preference of using Tuvan language, today preference of using Tuvan language has dropped to 32,231% among the university students.

The results of these studies show significant changes in the attitude of the preferences of language in education. While the parents in 2002 were demanding that their children received education in the Tuvan language, those children, who are university students today, have stated a preference for the Russian language as the education language of future children.

When the Tuvan case is evaluated using this theoretical viewpoint, a controversial picture emerges. Favorable demographic conditions are essential for the vitality of

Table 6

**«In which language would you prefer your children to receive education?»
Out of 242 participants**

163 students	67.355%	In Russian language
15 students	6.198%	In Tuvan language
24 students	9.917%	In an other language
11 students	4.545%	In Russian and Tuvan languages
21 students	8.677%	In Russian and other languages
13 students	5.371%	In Russian, Tuvan and other languages

Table 7

32.231%	«In which language would you prefer your children to speak?»
97.52%	«Specifying the native language?»
67.355%	«In which language would you prefer your children to receive education?»

Table 8

«In your opinion under which of the following symbols would the Tuvan people be most likely to unite?» (2001)		«What is the mandatory condition for the existence of the Tuva ethnoses?»(2010)	
Language	85%	National customs	23,96% (58 человек из 242 участников)
Traditions and customs	76,2%	Native language	18,18% (44 человек из 242 участников)

Table 9

«Usage of the native language in dialogue with children» (2002)		«In which language would you prefer your children to speak?» (2010)	
Schoolchild	In Tuvan 74%	In Tuvan	32,231%
Schoolchild	In Tuvan 61%	In Russian	29,752%
Preschool	In Russian 7%	In Tuvan and Russian	4,545%
Schoolchild	In Russian 11%		

language. The Tuvan demography has overwhelmingly developed in favor of the Tuvan nation. Besides this the sociopolitical status of the Tuvan language in governmental and social institutions have been historically supported by the governmental apparatuses. As a consequence of these factors the Tuvan language is hegemony in daily life in Tuva today.

«In your opinion in which language is it better to educate children?» (2002)		«In which language would you prefer your children to receive education?» (2010)	
Preschool	51% in Tuvan	In Russian	67,355%
First class	29% In Russian, 16% In Tuvan 6-10% In Tuvan and Russian.	In Tuvan	6,198%
Other classes	39% In Russian 20-30% In Tuvan and Russian	In Russian and Tuvan	4,545%

On the other hand the social status of language and in connection to the peoples preference towards the choice of language is another issue, which deeply affects the language shift. Our research findings show that the center-periphery integration in Tuva occurred through urbanization. As a result of this population movement people who have migrated to urban districts displayed a tendency for the Russian language as the language of education or profession. Hence it seems that the Russian language had become a more preferable language when compared to Tuvan in the field of education.

Consequently it would be better to rethink the language issue in Tuva by keeping the probable results of the politics of regional consolidation in mind.

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