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Research Article

The Characteristics of Societal Bilingualism in Russia: Why do Tatarstan and Yakutia Stand out?

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Abstract. Since Russia has always been a multicultural and multilingual country, there are many regions where several official languages (apart from the Russian language) coexist. Needless to say, bilingualism has its own peculiarities in each region. What would be the difference between the linguistic situation in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) and the Republic of Tatarstan? In the present article, we are aiming to investigate the peculiarities of bilingualism in the two above-mentioned republics. Based on the analysis of the historical background of minority languages and current language policies, the article provides an overview of the linguistic situation in terms of language status and language use of minority languages in the educational system. It has shown that despite similar language policies, the actual situation in Tatarstan and Yakutia is different, especially in terms of preference for learning the minority language at school. It is concluded that it is necessary to develop bilingualism in the regions and organize the necessary methodological support for parents and teachers.

Key words: multilingualism, bilingualism, minority languages, regional languages, Yakut (Sakha) language, Tatar language, heritage languages

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Особенности социального билингвизма в России: чем он отличается в Татарстане и Якутии?

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Аннотация. Россия всегда была поликультурной и многоязычной страной, поэтому во многих регионах сосуществует несколько официальных языков (помимо русского). Двужычие имеет свои особенности в каждом регионе. Исследованы особенности двуязычия в Республике Саха (Якутия) и Республике Татарстан. Проведен анализ исторического фона миноритарных языков и современной языковой политики. Представлен обзор языковой ситуации с точки зрения языкового статуса и языкового использования миноритарных языков в системе образования. Выявлено, что, несмотря на схожую языковую политику, реальная ситуация в Татарстане и Якутии различна, особенно в плане предложений изучения миноритарного языка в школе. Сделан вывод о необходимости развития двуязычия в регионах и организации необходимой методической поддержки родителей и педагогов.

Ключевые слова: многоязычие, двуязычие, миноритарные языки, региональные языки, якутский язык, татарский язык, языки наследия

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Introduction

Bilingualism and multilingualism phenomena are devoted to the study of two (and more than two) languages, respectively. Bilingualism or multilingualism is not considered to be a rare phenomenon globally and it is constituted a grassroots phenomenon in a great number of countries; there are, in fact, more multilingual speakers in the world than there are monolinguals. In the U.S. multilingualism is both an individual and a societal phenomenon, whereas in Europe plurilingualism applies to individuals, multilingualism applies to societies [1]. For reasons of convention and convenience, the term bilingualism is used as a cover term to include both bilingualism and multilingualism in this article. Within the scope of this article, we look at bilingualism as a social phenomenon in the context of local languages. Bilingualism has become an important feature of the

linguistic landscape in the last few decades and the contributing factors leading to bilingualism are migration and mobility [2].

Over the years, when speakers of one language settle in the area where another language is spoken and continue to maintain their own language, this eventually leads to societal bilingualism. Further languages spread over new territories through trade, religion, cultural contacts [3]. Nowadays, more children are growing up within several cultures and languages in society. Consequently, schooling systems and institutions have to accommodate young learners and provide them with necessary linguistic resources and expertise on multilingualism. For this purpose, several research centers and institutional organizations were founded to share research-based evidence on multilingualism accessible to families, communities, professionals in education, and policy-makers, such as Bilingualism Matters Network, Research Centre for Multilingual Practices and Language Learning in Society (Ghent University), The MOSAIC Group for Research on Multilingualism (University of Birmingham), Center for Multilingualism in Society across the Lifespan MultiLing (University of Oslo), Research Centre on Multilingualism (University of Fribourg), etc. In other words, bilingualism is a social phenomenon that is widely studied. To date, the problem has received scant attention in the research literature on bilingualism in Russia.

In this article, we are to describe the characteristics specific to bilingualism in the Russian context in two geographically and linguistically distant areas which are the republic of Tatarstan and Sakha (Yakutia). The aim of this study is to answer the research question what the difference between the linguistic situation in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) and the Republic of Tatarstan is.

Materials and Methods

To shed light on the linguistic situation in Tatarstan and Yakutia, we have analyzed a number of sources, such as historical data on minority languages (1); official documents which legally regulate how the majority language (Russian) and minorities languages (Tatar and Yakut languages) function in the society (2) and official documents that define the interaction of two languages in the educational system in the republics mentioned above (3). In this article, we apply text analysis.

(1) Analysis of historical data based on the following sources: Ethnologue Encyclopedia; National report to UNESCO submitted by the Russian Federation on the implementation of provisions of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities;

(2) In terms of official documents that legally regulate the interaction of languages in the republics, we have examined the Constitution of the Russian Federation; Constitution of the Republic of Tatarstan; Constitution of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia); official websites of the local governments in Tatarstan

(tatarstan.ru) and Yakutia (sakha.gov.ru); resolution of the Republican Scientific and Practical Conference in Yakutia;

(3) Concerning official documents in educational systems, we have explored official websites of regional ministries of education in Tatarstan (mon.tatarstan.ru) and Yakutia (minobrnauki.sakha.gov.ru); official websites of major universities in Tatarstan and Yakutia, and other republics where the Tatar language is spoken (Bashkir State University, Bashkir State Pedagogical University named after M. Akmullah, Sterlitamak Branch of Bashkir State University, Kazan Federal University, Mordovian State Pedagogical Institute named after m. Evsevieva; The Ammosov North-Eastern Federal University in Yakutia).

Discussion

Multilingualism in Russia: Historical Background

Multilingualism has been a continuous feature of Russian history. As the Russian empire developed new territories, it incorporated a multi-ethnic, multi-confessional population who were able to speak a number of different languages. In Soviet times, the country's cultural, religious, and ethnic minority groups have been going through waves of assimilationist policies and practices. Assimilation into Soviet society enforced through formal schooling, daily life and mass media has led to the changes in the regional lifestyles, cultures, identities, and languages. What is more, during different periods in the historical development the Russian language performed and continues to perform the function of the language of interethnic relations, uniting different communities within a multinational federation. The Russian language was the de facto language of the Soviet Union until its dissolution; Soviet legacies have resulted in determining minority rights in modern Russia.

Nowadays, the Russian Federation has been a multinational state home to 193 ethnic groups, speaking 277 languages and dialects (The Fifth Report submitted by the Russian Federation Under Article 25, paragraph 2 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities). Furthermore, Russia is one of the countries with the highest language diversity in the world, namely, 97 indigenous languages [4]. Currently, the Russian Federation includes 22 republics, 12 of which are generally referred to as 'ethnic republics' in light of the (one or more) titular nationalities after which they are named. They represent areas of non-Russian ethnicity. The Russian language is used as a widely used lingua franca throughout the Russian Federation. To describe the status of minority languages in Russia, it is necessary to determine how linguistic rights are generally regulated in Russia.

The constitution gives the individual republics of the country the right to establish their own state languages in addition to Russian which are called "state

languages of the republics” (“The Constitution of the Russian Federation”, Article 68, § 2). They are recognized as state languages of the republics as opposed to Russian as the state language (for the country in its entirety); terms ‘minority languages’ and ‘regional languages’ are also used interchangeably in this article. Thus, the minority language is a language that is not the dominant language of a territorial unit such as a state, because the speakers of the language have less power (they have been minoritized), and the language is generally spoken by a smaller number of people [5]. The Law of the Russian Federation of October 25, 1991, No. 1807–1 ‘On Languages of the Peoples of the Russian Federation’ establishes the equality of the languages of the peoples of the Russian Federation (Part 1, Article 2), the possibility of their use in official spheres in a certain territory in the area of compact residence (Part 4, Article 3) [6].

Russia’s most widespread minority languages are Tatar (5.35 million speakers), Bashkir (1.38 million), Chechen, and Chuvash (1.33 million each) (after 2010 census statistics). Currently, Russia’s republics have the right to self-determine the culture and linguistic identity of many of its minorities and self-regulate in the education sphere, as to require the compulsory study of regional languages recognized as co-official with Russian in schools [7]. The language of the republic can be used by public authorities, local government bodies, state institutions of the republics (Part 32, Article 68 of the Russian Constitution).

Until 2017, minority languages were compulsory at school in republics even for non-native speakers of them such as ethnic Russians. After inspections by Public Prosecutor’s Office in 2017, the question of the lawfulness of compulsory learning of republican languages at school received widespread public attention (Vladimir Putin’ meeting in Yoshkar-Ola on Interethnic Relations). On one hand, many native speakers of the republic supported the compulsory learning of their language to promote the language and its culture; the prohibition of compulsory language learning may lead to significant limitations of the republics in the full realization of the right to establish their state language. On the other hand, everyone has the freedom to choose the language of instruction and education and as it has been declared by some ethnic Russians ‘their children should not be forced to learn the language of the republic’ (Studying of National Languages in Russia is Voluntary). The question of balance between the linguistic rights of the majority and supporting minority languages has arisen.

Nowadays, studying the state language of the republic has become voluntary; therefore, it is interesting to see how different regions of Russia cope with new regulations. Two geographically and linguistically distant regions were chosen for the study, namely Yakutia and Tatarstan. Russian serves as one of state languages in both republics, whereas each region has its own additional state language — the Yakut (Sakha) language and the Tatar language, respectively.

In short, Russia has a long history of multilingual practices throughout different historical stages. Presently, republics of Russia have the right to establish their

own state languages (minority languages) in addition to Russian which is being a commonly used lingua franca. The present study contributes to the understanding of how the Sakha (Yakut) language and the Tatar language function within their local communities.

Tatar minority and their heritage language

According to the 2010 Census, in terms of the portion of the entire Russian population, Tatar people take up to 3,72 %, being one of the largest ethnic groups next to Russians, numbering around 5 million people in Russia and 6 million worldwide; 53 % of the population of Tatarstan which is around 2 million inhabitants, declared themselves to be ethnic Tatars, and 40 % are Russians.

The constitution of the republic proclaimed two official languages in the region — Tatar and Russian. Tatar is a regional co-official language of the Republic of Tatarstan and it belongs to the Kipchak branch of Turkic languages [8]. Tatar was written with Arabic script until a Roman-based alphabet was introduced in 1927. In 1939, a variant of the Cyrillic alphabet was adopted. In the post-Soviet era, a new Roman-based alphabet has been created, although it has not yet replaced the Cyrillic-based script [9].

The Republic of Tatarstan is one of the distinctive regions of the Russian Federation in terms of protecting its national identity, language, and culture. Tatarstan as part of the Russian Federation follows the recommendations of the Russian Ministry of Education in respect to language education (The Constitution of the Republic of Tatarstan). The language policy priorities implemented in the Republic of Tatarstan are the preservation and development of their ethnic languages and cultures. Their language policy is based on the consolidation and maintenance of the balance between Tatar and Russian as co-official languages [10]. Moreover, there are also scattered Tatar speaking groups in other central parts of the Russian Federation. For example, 1 million Tatars live in Bashkortostan [9].

Another important factor for relatively wide language use in Tatarstan is the language status among the community, or, in other words, attitudes towards speaking the language in the society and corresponding language policies. It has been claimed that the Tatar language, despite being a minority language in Russia, has a respectable status in the Republic of Tatarstan; therefore, it is strong enough to compete with the Russian language in various aspects of life [11; 12].

Concerning the local language policies, the government made efforts in ensuring that the Tatar language is represented across the republic. For instance, street signs and government documents became bilingual; on this basis, the language is more presented visually in the city.

State programs on language and education of the peoples of Tatarstan have been designed to create opportunities for the support of the Tatar language

education. Also, other cultural institutions — such as theatres, music, and art schools — financed to maintain and support cultural production in Tatar on the official level [13]. Meanwhile, a considerable presence of the Russian population is a significant factor in the regional language policy, which promotes the discourse of peaceful interethnic coexistence. Therefore, the policy of ‘biculturalism’ is conducted equally for the two main groups in the republic, this includes similar amounts of resources that should be allocated to Russian and Tatar cultural institutions [14; 15].

In terms of secondary education, there were 2374 schools where the Tatar language was taught in 1995–1996 academic year and only 757 schools in 2013–2014 academic year (according to kazan.aif.ru); and 785 schools with the Tatar language as a language of instruction in the 2015–2016 academic year (according to kazved.ru). It has been claimed that Tatarstan has a ‘significant language policy’, with greater success when compared to neighboring regions; however, the usage of Tatar faces a general downward trend [11; 12].

Before 1991, higher education in Tatarstan was almost exclusively in Russian; thus, graduates of Tatar-language schools were at a disadvantage in having to take entrance exams in Russian to be admitted to the universities. In 1992, the republic’s language law was passed. It allowed students applying to Russian-language universities to pass their entrance exams in the Tatar language, largely resolving the problem which leads to a higher status of the Tatar language in the society. The opening of the Tatar State Humanities Institute in 1996 provided an impetus for other universities to offer instruction even in Tatar [16].

Moreover, degree programs and teacher training of the Tatar language are offered not only in Tatarstan but also in other republics of Russia such as the Republic of Bashkortostan, and the Mordovia Republic; in four cities as Ufa, Sterlitamak and Kazan, Saransk. This means that teaching the Tatar language goes beyond one republic. Additionally, free Tatar language courses are also offered at Kazan Federal University in Naberezhnye Chelny. These courses are for all levels, as beginners, intermediate and advanced levels .

A sociological survey conducted by researchers at Kazan Federal University in 2012 (quota sample of 1590 respondents):’ announced that 53 % of Tatarstan residents speak Russian at home with their children, parents and spouses while another 20 % use both state languages, and 26 % speak Tatar [17]. Additionally, it has been concluded that proficiency in the Tatar language is higher among the rural population, while among urban Tatars it is sinking [18].

To summarize, the Republic of Tatarstan is being one of the distinctive regions in Russia when it comes to protecting its national identity and language. The Tatar language is used as a medium of instruction at elementary and secondary school levels; however, regardless of its prestigious status and the efforts by the Tatar community and local authorities, there is a downward trend in teaching Tatar at schools, especially in urban areas.

Yakut minority and their heritage language

The Yakut language belongs to the Northeastern or Siberian branch of Turkic languages. There are about 380 000 native speakers living in northeastern part of Siberia, mainly in the Yakut Autonomous Republic within the Russian Federation [9]. A Cyrillic alphabet was created in the mid-19th century. A new script, based on the International Phonetic Alphabet was introduced in 1922. It was later replaced by a new Roman-based script, which was in use until a Cyrillic alphabet was introduced in 1939. The orthographic rules of the modern Yakut followed phonetic principles, mirroring the actual pronunciation with its numerous assimilations [9].

In terms of the Ethnolinguistic Composition of the Russian Population, Yakuts take up 0,34% of the entire Russian population. Speaking of languages of the indigenous peoples in Siberia, the most spoken of them are — the Yakut, Buryat, and Tuva, while only hundreds or even dozens can speak languages of Ents, Chulym, Tofolars, Oroks .

According to the UNESCO report on Multilingualism in Russia, the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) is among the unique places of the world for the survival of languages. Even though the Sakha language (also known as Yakut) is a language of the small titular ethnic entity, it is developing there while the Yakut people promote not only their own native language but also other languages of the Northern indigenous minorities (Evenki, Yukagir, Dolgan, and Chukchi) [19].

The Yakut language serves as a language of instruction and a subject in public kindergartens, schools, and universities. There are 16 kindergartens in the republic where the Yakut language is taught as a first language (54 groups with coverage of 1674 children). Additionally, there are 32 kindergartens where conversational Yakut language classes are conducted (with the participation of 2972 children). There are 52 municipal schools with 31,557 school children. The number of Sakha children of school age is 16137, amongst which 12495 children speak the Yakut language. So, the vast majority of Sakha children speak their native language. In terms of teaching hours at schools where Russian is taught as a native language, ‘the Yakut language as a state language’ and “Culture of the peoples of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)” are taught 1 hour per week each of the subjects. The Yakut language and literature are taught 5 hours a week in 1–4 grades; 4 hours in 5–9 grades; 2 hours in 10–11 grades. Regardless of whether Yakut is a native language or not, there are still compulsory Yakut classes for all students at school.

The number of educational institutions teaching the languages of the indigenous peoples of the North is increasing. In 2004, the native languages of the indigenous small-numbered peoples of the North were studied in 31 schools; in 2012, out of 636 educational institutions of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), 38 schools (including nomadic ones) study the languages of the indigenous small-numbered peoples of the North. In 2000, only 2 preschool educational institutions conducted training in the languages of the indigenous minorities of the North, in 2012 their number reached

20 (Resolution of the Republican Scientific and Practical Conference). A distinctive feature of this region is nomadic schools when children roam with their parents-reindeer herders. There are 10 nomadic schools in the region .

Apart from studying the Yakut language, there are other indigenous languages taught at school, such as the Even language (840 people in 15 schools), the Evenk language (1269 people in 15 schools), the Yukaghir language (89 people), and Chukchi language (70 people in one school) .

Compared with the data of the 1993–1994 academic year in 2011–2012, the share of students of the Yakut language and those studying the Yakut language as a subject increased from 35.9% to 62.9%, the share of general educational institutions with the Yakut language of instruction and those in which the Yakut language is studied as a subject increased from 69.9% to 97.1% .

In the republic, there is a positive dynamics in the choice of the language as a native language, as the main factor of ethnic identity. Compared to 2002, the number of Yakuts who consider their native language their ethnicity increased to 94% (2002–92.6%), Chukchi — up to 42.8% (2002–37.7%), Yukaghirs — up to 23% (2002–19.5%) .

Undergraduate and Master degrees for teachers of the Yakut language are being provided at the Institute of languages and cultures of the peoples of North-East Russia at The Ammosov North-Eastern Federal University, NEFU, the largest higher education institution in the Russian northeast and it is one of the ten federal universities of the nation. These degrees include various study programs such as Pedagogical Education in Native Language Yakut; Native Language and Literature of Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East and Primary Education; Russian Philology (Even, Evenki, Yukagir, Chukchi, Dolgan languages and literature); Theory and Methods of Forming a Polylingual Person in a Multicultural Society; Folk Art Culture (The Cultural Heritage of the Peoples of the North-East of the Russian Federation)

Given that, the Federal Institute of Native Languages of the Peoples of the Russian Federation executes several initiatives to study and preserve the languages of the North's low-numbered indigenous peoples. Under the Children of the Arctic federal program, various manuals should be created and published in languages of the low-numbered indigenous peoples. For instance, school textbooks are dedicated to the disappearing Tundra Yukaghir language.

Speaking of modernization of the Yakut language itself, a contemporary approach towards language maintenance has been taken by Yakutia's National Library and Yandex. They launched a translation engine in the Yakut language, which offers a few hundred thousand translations into Yakut and from it daily. This proves the importance of language technologies in preserving and promoting regional languages .

In a nutshell, Yakutia is among the unique places of the world for the survival of languages. The Yakut language serves as a lingua franca in the region of Yakutia

for the locals as for the other Northern indigenous minorities (Evenki, Yukagir, Dolgan, and Chukchi) over there. In Yakutia, indigenous languages are included in the multilingualism practices in education to support and protect these languages; local policies to protect indigenous languages and preventing them from language death are put in place. In this complex linguistic situation, there is an upward trend in teaching the Yakut language at schools and positive dynamics in identifying the Yakut language as a native language among the locals.

Discussion

Based on the language policy analysis, the main features of regional bilingualism in Tatarstan and Yakutia are the following:

1) Russian VS minority languages bilingualism is asymmetrical in many respects

Currently, Tatar-Russian bilingualism is being asymmetrical in many respects. First of all, most Tatars speak Russian fluently, while a majority of Russians have only a basic knowledge of the Tatar language. Even though both languages have the status of official languages of the Tatarstan Republic on equal terms. The study of Russian by a Tatar person is often taken as an inevitable process while learning the minority language is seen by many Russian-language residents of the republic as useless. Therefore, Tatar officials and scholars have argued that Tatar will not achieve equal status with Russian in the republic as long as all Tatars speak the Russian language but no Russians speak Tatar.

The majority of habitats in the region are the Tatars (over 50 %) and Russians take up over 40 % only and 86 % of the entire population regard Tatar as their mother-tongue (Johanson 2006). Therefore, speaking the Tatar language is common for the ethnic majority.

Speaking of the Yakut language, the situation of its influence in the region is different. Despite the strong dominance of Russian, which is the language of higher education, Yakut has a relatively strong status in the republic, also being used as a second language by many speakers of Evenki, Even, and Yukagir [9]. Therefore, the Yakut language is not only the minority language in the region but also a lingua franca for other local minorities.

To sum it up, both Tatar and Yakut languages are promoted in the respective republics. Tatar is widely used not only in Tatarstan but also in Bashkortostan and Mordovia; Yakut is used as a language of communication between various communities in the republic, not only by Yakuts and Russians, but also by many speakers of Evenki, Even, and Yukagir.

2) Coexistence of two state languages amid the different religions leads to bilingualism with the traits of biculturalism

Religious and cultural background in Russia is quite diverse. In terms of religion, Tatars' religion is Islam, while the Yakutia population adheres mainly

to Sakha shamanism and the Russian Orthodox Church. In terms of culture, as the Moscow school of psycholinguistics claims that language consolidates the cultural experience of a community. The Moscow Psycholinguistic School has shown that one of the effective methods of studying the culture of an ethnic group is to analyze its associative dictionaries [20]. Associative dictionaries were collected for both the Yakut and Tatar ethnic groups. As these associative dictionaries have shown, the Yakut dictionaries, to a greater extent than the Tatars, have associations that refer to both Russian and Yakut culture. Therefore, we claim that the Tatar and Yakut ethnic groups are not only bilingual but also bicultural.

However, the study of bicultural bilinguals from a linguistic and cultural point of view has always been a problematic issue [21]. Bilinguals have their own unique linguistic and cultural competencies which define their cultural identification; therefore, linguistic revival is a crucial part of their distinctive identity [22]. Their national identity is transmitted through language which is the greatest source of attachment to a community. The language is the mechanism to protect and keep them alive, ‘ethnicity may not be related to language, whereas language as a boundary marker is always related to ethnicity’ [23].

To sum it up, diverse religious and cultural background in Russia leads to biculturalism among its population and cohabitation between the minority groups and ethnic Russians. Bilingualism provides an insight into the understanding of different cultures; thereafter, a bilingual become bicultural.

3) Bilingualism with the traits of multilingualism which includes other indigenous languages apart from the main minority language.

There are numerous dialectal forms of the Tatar language as well as of the Yakut language. The major Tatar dialects are Kazan Tatar (spoken in Tatarstan) and Western or Misher Tatar (spoken in other parts of Russia and abroad). Other varieties include the minor eastern or Siberian dialects, Kasimov, Tepter (Teptyar), and Astrakhan, and Ural Tatar (Ethnologue Encyclopedia).

There are also several dialects, even separate languages when it comes to the languages of Yakutia. Yakutia is represented by a wider variety of indigenous languages, such as the languages of Ents, Chulym, Tofolara, Oroks. Therefore, Yakut serves as a lingua franca for other minorities in the region of Yakutia. Another important peculiarity of the Yakut people is that they promote the languages of the Northern indigenous minorities (Evenki, Yukagir, Dolgan, and Chukchi), even though these indigenous languages have been understudied.

4) Disbalance between rural VS urban areas

One of the important factors to choose a language of internal communication within the family is the socio-economic status of the household. This has been repeatedly mentioned in the literature on bilingualism. Studies by Tovar-García and Podmazin [24] show that Tatar children from families with better financial conditions and those who live in urban areas are more likely to use the Russian

language at home compared to families from rural areas with lower socioeconomic status who use the Tatar language on a daily basis.

Since Russian remains the main means of communication in everyday life in the entire country, it is highly prestigious. Parents with higher incomes are willing to invest in their children's education, so they have more opportunities for their future life. Besides, the Russian language provides opportunities not only to achieve higher goals academically but also to advance professionally, that is, it is the language of socio-economic advancement that directly influences the quality of life afterward [25].

Meanwhile, those citizens who reside in villages prefer speaking their heritage language as their ancestors to keep the traditions. The minority language has been passed down from generation to generation. Since there is a continuing necessity of different social functions and different domains of use for each language [26], the Tatar language is the language of daily communication for their communities.

There are also other studies suggesting that school students from families with high-socio-economic status and from larger towns and cities have lower probabilities of having good knowledge of the minority language [27].

Consequently, the “rural VS urban” factor is playing a relevant role in choosing a language for internal communication within a family. Families living in bigger cities choose Russian as the primary language of communication, while villagers tend to speak Tatar with other members of their community. Along with that, larger cities have a positive impact on the use of a majority language (Russian) at home.

5) Shortage of teachers proficient in a minority language which leads to teaching minority languages in primary schools only

However, it is been reported a shortage of primary school teachers who are native or proficient enough to teach in the minority language and also have the necessary education. Thus, even though a titular language has a high status in society, there are also external constraints that influence the teaching minority languages process at schools. Therefore, there are initiatives are to launch training programs and interactive resources for teachers. So, they can teach the next generation.

In Tatarstan, the number of teachers of the Tatar language decreased by 30 % over 2018, the number of teachers of the Tatar language and literature has decreased from 5 thousand to 3.5 thousand over the year, Ilmur Khadiullin, First Deputy Minister of Education and Science of Tatarstan, said. He noted that 1,224 teachers were retrained and began to teach Russian, mathematics, physics (Tat Center).

Nevertheless, it is important to point out that the minority languages are reported to be languages of instruction at primary school only and they are used by a small minority of ethnic minority students [28].

To sum it up, languages should not only be studied as an academic discipline but also should be used as the language of tuition. Lack of teachers leads to minority languages taught at primary schools only, which potentially leads to students losing their (poor) knowledge in middle and high schools.

6) Research is based on language use than on proficiency level among minority language speakers

Since the definition of bilingualism requiring native control of two languages is too extreme, the idea of perfect balance and perfect mastery of two or more languages is no longer considered a requirement to be bilingual. The use of two or more languages in everyday life is the main characteristic when defining bilingual individuals. A majority of research papers about minority languages in Russia focus more on bilingualism as a whole regardless of the level of proficiency among the communities.

Therefore, the dimension of language use rather than language proficiency is often purposefully used as a basis for conducting research. The proficiency level is also hard to measure since it varies from region to region, from family to family; a number of factors should be controlled for in the research which takes the level of proficiency into account.

7) English as a global thread for minority languages

Apart from factors related to the sociolinguistic situation in Russia, there are also global trends. A growing interest in bilingualism and multilingualism that has recently been observed is connected with a growing number of bilinguals due to an increasing role of the English language as a global language and its intense spread as a *lingua franca*.

While the positions of the English language have been strengthened, regional languages are becoming increasingly vulnerable in the context of internalization due to the rising importance of the English language as a *lingua franca*. While the study of Russian and English language would be part of the required curriculum, many in the ethnic republics might fear this situation would mean fewer opportunities for minority-language speakers.

In the globalized world, English is the first choice as a second language for the majority of monolinguals since it is the undisputed leader in international communication and it offers more career and study opportunities. As some studies show [29] in contemporary Tatar society, there appears to be more motivated to use Russian and English than Tatar. Naturally, people who are concerned about their careers will learn foreign languages; therefore, it might cause a detrimental effect on the use of the republican language as the Tatar language. In schools, ethnic Russians prefer English to Tatar, and ethnic Tatars, frequently, prefer Russian and English to Tatar language. Therefore, English as a mandatory subject at school causes fewer opportunities for minority-language speakers to take classes in their mother tongue since taking classes in their heritage languages might affect their educational achievement in mandatory subjects.

Consequently, it is crucial for the future of minority languages as languages of instruction in Russia to know whether they threaten or support educational achievements, which is a major concern for parents and teachers.

Conclusion

This article gives an overview of the linguistic background of two Russian ethnic republics (Tatarstan and Yakutia), describing the language use of the Tatar and the Yakut languages in educational systems in their respective regions.

We have examined a number of peculiarities that pertain to bilinguals in their communities, such as the coexistence of the state language and a minority language amid the different religions that leads to bilingualism with the traits of biculturalism; disbalance between rural VS urban areas; shortage of teachers proficient in a minority language which leads to teaching minority languages in primary schools only; research is mostly based on language use than on proficiency level among minority language speakers. Apart from the above-mentioned features, bilingualism in these two republics includes other indigenous languages besides the main minority language and English is being a threat for these minority languages as in many other countries globally. Therefore, Russian VS minority languages bilingualism is being asymmetrical.

Both in Tatarstan and Yakutia, minority languages are considered as the core of national linguistic self-awareness. In these republics, bilingualism serves as a stimulus for the coexistence of several cultures in one region. However, it has been noticed certain linguistic differences between these two communities. There is a certain degradation in using the Tatar language among minority speakers in public schools and universities while positive dynamics in using the Yakut language in schools has been observed. Despite similar language policies, two languages have a different status in their communities and educational institutions.

Population mobility and movement of people have caused challenges for educators and policy-makers. Regardless of many cultural and religious changes for the past centuries, Russia still remains a country with plenty of minority languages which also include indigenous languages. Multilingualism practice in education should embrace the indigenous, national, and official as equal partners in the language policy development and education. In support of the implementation of needed language policies, it is necessary to identify the factors influencing the loss of languages of indigenous and local communities and the way how to teach effectively in linguistically and culturally diverse contexts.

To sum it up, studying bilingualism in the context of Russia can provide a new perspective on the current linguistic landscape and the role of republican languages. Adding information on social factors that influence the way minority languages and official languages are used would be also beneficial for policy makers, teachers and the research community.

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