

Features of the Language of Tatars Living in China

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Abstract: This study is focused on linguistic (phonetic, lexical and grammatical) features of speech of the Tatar diaspora living in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (People's Republic of China). The language of the Tatars living in this area has undergone certain changes due to its interactions with the contacting Turkic (Uyghur and Kazakh) languages. Due to the historical events, this language has been evolving in isolation from the modern Tatar-speaking population in the Chinese-speaking environment. For this very reason, archaic elements typical of the Old Tatar language have been preserved in it. On the other hand, the close territorial contacts, as well as national and cultural ties with the Uyghurs and Kazakhs have been establishing good conditions for penetration of Chinese words into the language of Tatars living in China. Studying the lexical and grammatical features of the language of the Tatar diaspora in the People's Republic of China plays a significant role for solving individual problems related to the history and dialectology of the Modern Tatar and other Turkic languages (in particular, Uyghur and Kazakh ones).

Key words: Tatar language • Diaspora • Lexical and grammatical features • Borrowings • Dialect

INTRODUCTION

Much attention has recently been paid to studying the linguistic features of immigrants and diasporas of various nationalities [1-12], since they successfully preserved their native language and the main elements of the traditional national culture to a large extent, as well as maintained the sense of belonging to their national homeland, while being developed within a different social and political system.

This work is focused on the problems of studying the language in families of the Tatar diaspora living in the Xinjiang Region, since this region has become the center of eastward migration of the Tatars.

The waves of Tatar immigration to this region of China, which started in late XIX–early XX centuries, were superposed on the historical and cultural background and linguistic situation that took place in the multinational Xinjiang Region during this period. Three waves of Tatar immigration are typically distinguished: the 1st wave in the 1830s; the 2nd wave started in 1851; and the 3rd wave in 1905–1917 [13].

Chinese cities of Kulja, Ürümqi and Tacheng were the centers of Tatar communities abroad. These cities can be regarded as the focus and the essence of the life of the Tatars who had immigrated eastwards. In these cities, the Tatars established a unique cultural environment in the similitude of the one they used to have back at their homeland: the “Tatar civilization” of its sort.

The material under study demonstrates that the similarity between the speech of immigrants of the same wave living in different countries (USA, Finland, Japan, China and Australia) is greater than that between the speech of immigrants of different waves living in the same country. We certainly mean the general phenomena rather than specific borrowings from the language of their new country. This similarity is also related to such an important phenomenon as different degrees of stability (preservation) of the Tatar language in immigrants of different waves.

The research into the features of functions of the Tatar language in this region, in the environment of native speakers isolated from the homeland is also important due to the fact that it allows one to reveal the interactions

between the languages characterized by different demographic and communicative power, being functionally unequal and genetically different. These data are important for the theory of verbal communication; in particular, it is of interest to study the features of interaction between the Tatar and Uyghur languages.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

No specialized study of the lexical and grammatical features of the language of Tatars living in China has been carried out yet. That is the reason why the topic is topical. The primary aim of this paper is to discuss the lexical and grammatical features of speech of the Tatar diaspora living in China. The spoken language of the Tatar diaspora living in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (People's Republic of China) is the object of the study. A combination of techniques and approaches was used in this work: the descriptive method was used to collect and systematize the data; synchronous linguistic description was used to describe the lexical borrowings in speech of the Tatar diaspora in China; the analytical method was used to process the field data; the comparative historical method was used to restore some facts from the history of the Tatars and the Tatar diaspora in China in order to determine the trends in transformation of its language; and contextual analysis, which enabled us to reveal the most productive lexico-grammatical forms and examine their changes as compared to the Modern Standard Tatar.

Main Body: According to the official Chinese census (2000), the number of Tatars living in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) of China is 4,873 (and over 5,500 according to the data of Tatar national organization). They predominantly live in the cities of Kulja, Ürümqi and Tacheng. In these cities, the Tatars did their best to form the cultural environment similar to the one they had at their historical homeland.

Although the trend towards preservation of the Tatar culture and language is quite noticeable, Tatar immigrants assimilate (either voluntarily or involuntarily). They are forced to permanently switch between one (their own Tatar) cultural and linguistic space to the other (foreign Chinese) and back. The admissible level of Tatar language proficiency (grammatical correctness, verbal behavior and linguistic choice), preservation of the features of the Tatar way of life, Tatar cultural traditions and moral values are mostly typical for the elder generation of the Tatar diaspora living in China.

Meanwhile, young people who study at schools, colleges and universities switch to communication in Chinese and lose their own language rather quickly. The Tatar language is mostly used in the household sphere (family communication or other types of informal communication with the representatives of their ethnic diaspora). The Tatar language is a communication tool inside a Tatar ethnic group or a family.

Almost all representatives of the Tatar diaspora living in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region have mentioned that they are less proficient in Tatar language as compared to their ancestors. The trend of losing language skills is increasing among immigrant children. The Tatar diaspora is now facing both problems: preserving the Tatar language and culture and teaching children Tatar language.

The Saturday courses of Tatar being held in China, where children of the Tatar immigrants study Tatar, cannot solve this problem. Teenagers from different (sometimes just ordinary families) are willing to study the language of their parents. Thus, Tatar language in China remains a means of communication between generations that has undergone various phonetic, lexical and grammatical changes for a number of reasons.

This study made it possible to reveal the following phonetic features in speech of representatives of the Tatar diaspora:

- Intonation instability;
- Devocalization of consonants at different positions of words: “maarip” - mÄgarif // education; “pajda” – fajda // benefit; “pÄn” - fÄn // science; “dÄptÄr” - dÄftÄr // notebook;
- Violation of the synharmonism law: “bilyq” – balyq // fish; “pialÄ” – pyjala // glass; “pÄmidur” - pomidor //tomatoes.

The speech of this Tatar group contains a significant number of means that are obsolete in Modern Tatar (i.e., the presence of linguistic means that became obsolete after the Revolution but still preserve their former status and are being actively used among the Tatars living in the Xinjiang region), such as “klit” - key, “kulup” - lock, “tÄtÄ” - mom, “ÄttÄ” - dad, “bakali” – grocery store, “cÄmÄk” - nail, “qat-qat” - pie, “balprÄnnek” - gingerbread, “cyrag” - light, “tabanca” - pistol and “capan” – jacket. These words constituting the active vocabulary of the Tatars living in the Xinjiang region are one of the links to Tatar language of the early XX century.

The vocabulary shows the ties, contacts and life of the main native speaker of Tatar language (the Tatars) with other peoples: the Uyghurs, the Kazakhs and the Chinese. The borrowings from these languages, various dialects and accents constitute a certain lexical stratum of Tatar language in China.

Being the most easily permeable part of language, the lexicon is most affected by other languages. The absence of close ties with the homeland and the main nation and the multilingual environment have determined the general local features of speech of the Tatars living abroad. The complex pattern observed in speech of the Tatar diaspora living in China was formed under the impact of external and internal factors during its historical evolution. The renewal of vocabulary took place via the universal methods: Tatar language borrowed some Uyghur words that sounded in a similar manner and had similar meaning, since it is a related Turkic language: “toxu” - hen, “xoraz” - rooster, “qunaq” - corn, “mumaj” - grandmother, “cal” - old man, “pijaz” - onion, “sÄbez” - carrot, “göresh” - rice, “nahsha” - song, “qoj” - sheep, “uckÄ” - goat, “möshek” - cat, “pajpaq” - socks, “jullyq” - present, etc.

Borrowings from the West European and Russian languages were also penetrating into the language of the Tatar diaspora living in China: “telefon” - telephone, “televizor” - TV set, “kompjuter” - computer, “radio” - radio, “malina” - raspberry, “varenje” - jam, “batinka” - boots, “bruka” - pants, “majka” - undershirt, “kastum” - suit, “shibli” - half-boot, “stolba” - pole, “padarka” - gift, “mashina” - car, “avtobus” - bus, “vokzal” - train station, “pojezd” - train, “ajroport” - airport, “ajroplan” - plane, “bulka” - roll, “kampit” - candy, “konsul” - consul, etc.

In the Eastern diaspora, Tatar language has also borrowed some words from Chinese (the language of the country of residence): “jaŋju” - potato, “lÄŋpun” - Chinese dish, “lasy” - hot pepper, “bÄsÄj” - Chinese cabbage, “cÄjzÄ” - eggplant, “lujuoŋ” - tape recorder, “dijÄnshi” - TV set and “biŋshan” - refrigerator. The structure of words borrowed from the Chinese language and used in speech of Tatar immigrants from Russia is follows: these words mean Chinese reality that is exotic for a Tatar and his/her traditional lifestyle. The process of lexical borrowings accompanied the acquaintance of the Tatar immigrants with certain aspects of life and lifestyle in a country foreign for them. Despite the intensity of the contacts between the Tatars and the Chinese in the Xinjiang region, not so many words were borrowed from Chinese language. There are

several (both linguistic and extra-linguistic) reasons for that. Unimpeded borrowing is usually hindered by the ortho-epic appearance of a Chinese word that is difficult for Tatar perception. Another reason is sociocultural: it was typical of the Tatars living in China to believe that their language was of higher social and cultural significance.

However, along with the borrowings from Uyghur and Chinese, the Tatars also actively used words of Arabic and Persian origin, which were typical of the Tatar vocabulary in the early XX century. This lexical stratum (with the most portion belonging to the religious field) was used both as an indicator of religious belonging (to Islam) and as a synonym of Turkic, Uyghur and other words [14]. For instance, “sandugac” (a Turkic word) — “bulbul” (A Persian word) // starling; “zarar” (an Arabic word) — “zijan” (a Persian word) - “nÄcar” (a Persian word), “kÄsÄfÄt” (арабское) // harm; “isÄnlÄshü” (a Turkic word) — “sÄlamlÄshü” (an Arabic word), etc.

Let us mention the following tendency for the proper names: most of them are of Arabic or Persian origin, which is welcome by the Islamic traditions. However, there are some international names as well. The following can be said about the proper names: the first names and patronyms are not used in most cases; however, the incomplete names and nicknames can be heard frequently: “Shadi” - Shadia, “Pakush” - Farhat, “KÄshi” - KÄshifÄ, “Lidush” - Lidia, “Filush” - Flora, “SÄüli” - SÄülÄsh, “Apu” - Abdulla, etc.

In our opinion, the functionality and amazing viability of Tatar in this environment was caused by the fact that the core group of Tatars who immigrated to this region mostly consisted of Russian Tatars with excellent intellectual and business traits, which were educated, creative and combined the global outlook and well-developed national identity.

The grammatical features of the speech of the Tatars living in China are as follows:

- The number of borrowed adjectives in the speech of immigrants is significantly smaller. Most of them are the adjectives borrowed without being grammatically modified; i.e., in the form they exist in the donor language (Uyghur or Chinese): “cyrajlyq” - beautiful, “pÄjze” - wonderful, “mÄjnÄt” - dirty, “sÄrt” - ugly, “saraŋ” - stupid, “jaÄnsu” - strict, “bÄjtce” - stupid, etc.

The verb (as a part of speech) is clearly contraposed to the noun in speech of the Tatar diaspora. The verb is a part of speech that cannot exist in Tatar without formal indicators of its verb nature. Hence, the verbs in the speech of the immigrant Tatars using the borrowed word stems are formed according to the pattern of the Tatar analytical verbs formed using auxiliary verbs. The language of the Tatar diaspora shows the same verb/noun opposition that is typical of it in its homeland. Verb conjugation is not abolished. Noun declension shows the phenomena attesting to the increase in the number of analytical forms. That is how hybrid verbs are formed (Chinese words + Tatar grammatical indicators): “cuaÄŇshu qylu” – to repair, “caŇvaŇ qylu” – to go online, “daiŇ qylu” – to print out, “caushaŇ tartu” – to take pictures, “cilÄ qylu” – to worry, etc.

The following forms of future participle are being actively used in speech of the diaspora members: -ar /-Är /-yr/-r, -atshaq/ -ÄtshÄq/ -jatshaq/ -jÄtshÄq. The first form of future participle, which is formed with affixes -ar /-Är /-yr/-r is used most commonly, namely: “ocar qosh” – a flying bird, “janar taw” – a volcano (literally, a burning mountain), “kölÄr jöz” – laughing face and “kelÄr qunaq” – a visiting guest.

In grammatical terms, a participle ending with -r means present-future or future tense: “Ocar qoshy kürdin my?” The negative form is formed by the affix -ma/-mÄ: “Ul kirmÄs jirgÄ kitti?” It is worth mentioning that there is a tendency toward passive use of this form in Modern Tatar.

There are several forms of adverbial participles in the language of the Tatar diaspora in China; they are formed using affixes -p/-yp; -up/-üp; -gac/-gÄc; -kac/-kÄc; -gyca/-gecÄ; -qyca/-qecÄ; -a/-Ä/-j; -gali/-gÄli; -kali/-kÄli; -gacka/-gÄckÄ; -kacka/-kÄckÄ. The form resulting from adding affixes -yp, -p, (-p, -üp) to the verb stem is the most common one. For instance, “karap” – having looked, “külüp” – while laughing, “jizyp” – while swimming, “süzlÄp” – while speaking, etc. Adverbial participle ending with -yp is characterized by a broad range of usage in all Tatar subdialects and in Turkic languages in general. It has different meanings: precedence and simultaneity; method, aim and reason for the action performed. Our observations have demonstrated that adverbial participles ending with -yp are actively combined with auxiliary verbs to participate in the formation of analytical verbs expressing the continuity of action and various modal forms: “ultryyp uku” – to read while sitting, “jazyp beterü” – to have written [15]. It should also be mentioned that the form ending with -yp

can be seen in the language of the Tatar diaspora both as an adverbial participle and as special forms of the past tense having the meaning of action being completed. The form ending with -ypty having a function of the result of an action that had been completed in the past has also been observed in spoken Tatar. These forms (-yp and -ypty) can be seen in Uyghur, Kazakh, Uzbek and other Turkic languages. A conclusion can be drawn that it is the existence of the yp- and -ypty forms that the language of the Tatars living in China is opposed to the literary Tatar language.

Summary: Thus, a number of general and unique features of the Tatar diaspora and Tatar immigration can be seen by an example of the Tatar diaspora and Tatar immigration in China. The Tatar diaspora in China has been existed over the period of the XIX–XXI centuries. One of the features of the Tatar diaspora in China is that there are a lot of representatives of intelligentsia (scientists, doctors and people engaged in education). There has actually never existed a national majority group in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region: this region consisted of national minorities: the Chinese, the Uyghurs, the Dungans and the Tatars. Even the Chinese were not the largest group. As a result, the region was trilingual: Uyghur, Chinese and Tatar were the main languages of international communication. The Tatars living in China have adopted a lot of things that are traditionally typical of a diaspora: being aware of belonging to the community, maintenance of the collective myth about the homeland, its translation (mostly via spoken language) and the idea of serving the homeland.

The current historical period bolsters the revival of the interest in Tatar and offers opportunities to strengthen it and use more extensively (meetings with people coming from Tatarstan, restoration of ties with the relatives that had been forcedly interrupted, visits to Tatarstan).

The immigrants refer to this stage as to the return to their historic homeland and their native language. Tatar language is strengthened and the spoken language of the Tatars living in China is renewed.

The Tatars living in China are a vivid example of complete and painless adaptation, seamless adaptation to a new foreign language environment, while showing no assimilation with the Chinese people at all. We can also see a new type of diaspora through the example of the Tatars in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region: a diaspora as one of peoples forming an international community having no predominant nation.

CONCLUSIONS

Thus, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- The Tatars living in China strive to preserve their native Tatar language, although it is impossible to attain complete preservation while living together with other nations far away from Tatarstan and Tatar native speakers;
- The phonetic features of the Tatar spoken language have undergone such alterations as: changes in intonation, devocalization of sonants, violation of the synharmonism law, which is indicative of its difference from the Modern Tatar literal language;
- The lexical features include the preservation of the words that are archaic in the Modern Tatar literal language; a great number of borrowed words (from Uyghur, Chinese, Kazakh, Arabic, Persian, Russian and European languages) being caused by the linguistic and extralinguistic factors of the environment the Tatar speakers live in;
- The grammar of the spoken language of the Tatars living in China is more stable as compared to the lexicon; it is characterized by features of word formation and the use of verb forms (including participles and adverbial participles), which either are not used any longer in the Modern Tatar literal language or have been preserved only in the distant Tatar dialects. It should be mentioned that the impersonal verb forms in the language spoken by the Tatar diaspora shows proximity to Kazakh and Uyghur languages. The linguistic analysis of adverbial participles and participles in the context of impersonal verb forms in the language of the Tatars living in China provided comprehensive understanding of the system of all the verb forms of Tatar subdialects in the peripheral regions.

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