TRANSFORMING SOVIET LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES INTO POST-SOVIET LANGUAGE POLICIES IN TATARSTAN

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In the decades immediately following the 1917 revolution Soviet language policy arose under the strong formative influence of the ideas of Nikolai Marr. Among Marr's beliefs was one in a stadial progression of languages towards convergence into a single linguistic system. In practice this translated into active russification of non-Russian Soviet languages. Russification was promoted descriptively and prescriptively both by describing non-Russian languages using Russian grammatical categories, such as verbal aspect and obligatory gender, and by grammatically modifying languages to make them closer to Russian, as in the case of Karelian and others.[1] More closely linked to Marr's theory of linguistic convergence was the practice of replacing non-Russian words with Russian lexical and semantic calques as a means for internationalizing non-Russian languages, cited as "one of the most productive methods for enriching the USSR's linguistic lexicon."[2]

Since Tatarstan's declaration of sovereignty in 1990, the government in Kazan and local intellectuals have been trying to undermine the hegemonic status of Russian as the normative language in the region. Thus the Tatarstan Constitution (1992) was written in both Russian and Tatar and the Tatarstan national anthem (1993) was composed by a Tatar. Both Tatar and Russian have been declared state languages and all Tatarstan children are studying them in school. A new language ideology[3] which does not presume that monolingualism in any one language is preferable to multilingualism is being advocated as a replacement for Soviet-period linguistic hierarchies. This article concerns how debates about language reflect larger ideological conflicts concerning how the world should be organized. The first part focuses on the conflicting ideologies of two linguists published in Kazan around the time Tatarstan declared sovereignty, while the second part describes the imagined social worlds described in post-Soviet Tatar language textbooks.

In a collection of articles on bilingualism published in Kazan in 1990, a Russian linguist, N.V. Maksimov, contrasts "old, artificial Tatar literary language" with "the natural development of the semantics of native [Tatar] words," which is not a "result of the influence of Russian".[4] This "natural development" is a "broadening of Tatar semantic fields," which Maksimov refers to as "evolution."[5] Despite Maksimov's claim, the implication is that Tatar semantic fields have become less narrow due to Russian influence. For the first "calques" cited by Maksimov are in fact terminological trappings of Soviet propaganda—bourgeoisie, proletariat, soviet, Party, and democracy.[6] This implication is carried through to the second list of words Maksimov provides the reader, which are true calques from Russian, for example *üzeshçenlek* (self-work orientedness) for *samodejatel'nost'* (self-activeness; *viz.* independent activity).[7] The Tatar word collocations he lists as representing the evolution of semantic fields also indicate an apparent accommodation of Soviet concepts, such as *syjnfyj köräsh* from *politicheskaja bor'ba* [political struggle].

Maksimov's argument here is misleading in a number of ways: In the above case he mistranslates *syjnfyj* [class or stratum] as *politicheskaja* [political]; in three examples his collocations are grammatically incorrect in that modified nouns are not appropriately affixed and two of his examples employ Ottoman adjectival forms – *syjnfyj* and ädäbi [literary] – not associated with modernized Turkic dialects.[8] The use of Ottoman forms may or may not mean that the broadening of

semantic fields Maksimov describes predates Sovieticization, but it does sow a seed of scepticism regarding whether these calques are recent inventions. Moreover, Maksimov's "calqueing" of Russian linguistic features into Tatar does not enrich, but rather impoverishes Tatar by erasing aspects of Tatar grammar, the historical exchange of language with the Ottoman Empire, and by narrowing the USSR's "linguistic lexicon" through the imposition of Russian borrowings like *politik* when a Tatar word for politics [säyasät] already exists.

Appearing in the same volume are two articles by Tatar linguist, F.K. Sagdeeva. Sagdeeva argues that Soviet policies has successfully narrowed the social functions of Tatar and blames Stalin, who deviated from Leninist norms, for these policies. Sagdeeva writes that many urban Tatars know their own native language poorly[9] and cites as examples of Russian "interference" into Tatar speech constructions that resemble to Maksimov's "calques." As an example of a sentence to which Sagdeeva objects on the grounds that it suffers from "interference" from Russian is the sentence, "*Bu kyz bik kul'turaly kienä*," meaning "This girl is very culturedly dressed."[10] Sagdeeva underlines the word *kul'turaly* to indicate that it represents interference from Russian. *Kul'turaly* is composed of the Russian word *kul'tura* and the Turkic suffix [*ly*], which creates adjectives or adverbs, and here approximates the Russian word "kul'turno."[11]

Sagdeeva's objections to code-mixing Russian into Tatar are understandable as a reaction to Soviet-period tendencies towards russifying Tatar and other non-Russian, Soviet languages. However, it appears that *kul'turaly* indexes a different social world from the Tatar word for "cultured" [*mädäni*]. F.A. Ganiev's Tatar-Russian Dictionary (1998) translates *mädäni*, itself borrowed from Arabic and therefore associated with Islam, as the proper [*prilichinyi*] and literary [*knizhnyi*] form for *kul'turnyi*, and the noun *mädinyät* as culture or civilization. Thus, the Tatar variant for "cultured" turns out to be a marked form indicating an elevated and likewise limited cultural realm, in appositon to the quotidian and relatively unmarked *kul'turaly*.[12] Consequently, were the sentence Sagdeeva cites to be spoken using pure "Tatar" words, the notion of culturedness referred to would be a specifically Tatar one, as opposed to a more broadly functioning Soviet (Russophone) one, and moreover, would index Islamic notions of what it means to dress in a cultured fashion. This ends up giving the sentence a quite narrow application indeed. For, although most Tatars consider themselves Muslims, only a small minority of unmarried women [*kyzlar*] wear Islamic modest, i.e. cultured, dress.

Perhaps the most significant step towards Tatarstan's de-Sovietization is the introduction of Tatar language as a required subject for all schoolchildren. Available Kazan bookstores at least since 1997 are a series of textbooks endorsed by the Tatarstan Ministry of Education and used to teach children Tatar, *Tatar tele*. The textbook I will examine here is for children in the fifth class. Aimed at ten-year-olds and mostly written in Tatar, it differs considerably from Soviet-period language textbooks[13] in that it does not present grammatical concepts through a window of Russian-based presuppositions about how languages are structured. Indeed, this particular textbook is most interesting as an instrument for nation-building in the post-Soviet period.

The role of this textbook as an instrument for nation-building is apparent even without looking at the contents of its individual exercises. The book's front cover is green, red, and white – the colors of the Tatarstan flag. The first and last pages of the volume exhibit Tatarstan's state seal *ak bars* (the white leopard), along side its flag. Below these are listed the dates of events significant to Tatarstan's growing autonomy. These are the August 30, 1990 Declaration of Tatarstan sovereignty; the June 12, 1991 election of the Tatarstan President; the March 21, 1992 referendum on the status of the Tatarstan Republic; the November 6, 1992 adoption of

the Tatarstan Constitution; the November 29, 1991 adoption of the Tatarstan State flag; the February 7, 1992 adoption of the State seal; and the August 27, 1993 adoption of the Tatarstan national anthem. These events are listed in Tatar on the inside front cover and in Russian on the inside back cover of the textbook. They accurately do not refer to any events before 1990 because it was only in that year that the Tatarstan Republic as such came into existence.[14]

Many of the exercises within the textbook are aimed at developing a particular national consciousness for inhabitants of the Tatarstan Republic. A chapter in the book called *Tatarstan - minem respublikam* [Tatarstan is my republic] begins with a text entitled *Beznen' Vatanybyz* [Our Native Land]. The text states: "Tatarstan is our native land. It is called the Tatarstan Republic. It has a state seal, a flag, and a national anthem. A winged white leopard is drawn on the state seal. He sees that our country is independent and strong....In Tatarstan Tatars, Russians, Maris, Chuvashes, Udmurts, and other friendly peoples live. November 6 is Tatarstan Constitution Day. The Constitution is written in both state languages, Tatar and Russian".[15]

Worth noting about this text is the use of the word *vatan* inclusively, since it has historically been used by Crimean Tatar nationalists to exclude other ethnic groups, among them other Turkic-speaking peoples. Also noteworthy is the absence of Bashkirs[16] from the list of friendly peoples living in Tatarstan. Spoken Bashkir is more similar to Tatar than any other the languages spoken by the ethnics grouped listed in the text. In addition, the assumption of an iconic relationship between language and ethnicity is pervasive among Tatarstan people. Thus, the absence of Bashkirs from the list presumably marks their subsumption within the category of Tatar.

Later in the same unit is a text outlining Tatarstan's history. It begins with Ivan the Terrible's 1552 conquest of Kazan, noting that he captured the city, but rebuilt it afterwards. It then lists the founding of Petropavel Cathedral by Peter the Great (1722), the construction of Märjani Mosque (1766), the establishment of Kazan State University (1804), the opening of the Tatarstan State Museum (1894), and the opening of the Kazan Zoo (1834).[17] It is not necessarily surprising that the Bolshevik Revolution is not one of the events listed in this history. It is worth noting, however, how positively Ivan the Terrible is represented, especially since many Tatars mourn the loss of life and forced conversions to Orthodoxy that accompanied their loss of independence in the 16th century, as well as their subsequent colonization by Russia. Indeed, the overall tone of the textbook is remarkable for its presentation of an inclusive and ethnically harmonious society.[18]

The textbook likewise contains texts which do not seem to be directly aimed at nation-building. Thus there is a moving piece about a little boy who had to have a tooth pulled and was very scared; another about how Marat writes letters to his granny who lives in the village; a third about the Petrovs, who live in Chistai [Chistopol'], and the fruits and vegetables they grow in their garden; and a fourth (in the unit described above) on the value of books, which are like close friends for small children.[19] In contrast to these texts, which lay no emphasis on ethnicity, is one which appears in Lesson Two.

This text, *Mäktäptä* [At School], differs from the texts cited above in that it creates separate, solidary ethnic groups. The entire text is as follows:

> Bez rus mäktäbendä ukyjbyz. Läjsän, Dilbär häm Färit tatar mäktäbendä ukyjlar. Bez rus, tatar häm ingliz telläreп öjränäler. Ishlat häm Alsu gimnazijadä ukyjlar. Alar bish tel öjränälär: rus, tatar, ingliz, garäp häm törek telläre[20]

> [We study at a Russian school. Laisan, Dilbar and Farit study at a Tatar school. We study Russian, Tatar, and English. They study Tatar, Russian, English, and Arabic. Ishlat and Alsu study at a gymnasium. They study

five languages: Russian, Tatar, English, Arabic and Turkish.]

This text creates divisions along ethnic lines, but is peculiar in that only one of the groups is marked by any ethnic attributes. The text does not state that the children studying at the Russian school are ethnic Russians; unlike the pupils who study at the Tatar school and gymnasium, the children who study at the Russian school are not marked by names that might index their ethnicity. By contrast, the children studying at the Tatar school and gymnasium are marked by ethnically Tatar names. They are moreover marked as religious. These children study Arabic, the language of the Quran, and therefore of Islam. There is no equivalent way of marking children studying at Russian schools since knowledge of Russian is sufficient for being a Christian, although it does not imply any religiosity whatsoever.

The children at the Tatar gymnasium study Turkish in addition to Arabic, along with the three stock languages studied by everybody. Despite the perilous position of Soviet citizens who knew foreign languages up until perestroika, knowing multiple foreign languages has carried great symbolic capital in recent years. Knowing English and other foreign languages is valued as a means for acquiring wealth through joint ventures and access to the world beyond Soviet borders. Moreover, Tatarstan's biggest foreign investor at the time when this textbook was written was the Republic of Turkey. Knowledge of Arabic and Turkish may not be especially appealing to non-Tatars. Nevertheless, the implication of this text seems to be that children who study at Tatar schools and gymnasiums will be better prepared to live moral and prosperous lives as adults.

Although only a few texts have been examined in this article, they are indeed representative of a shift in the imagined social worlds presented in texts on Tatar language since in the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991. Maksimov and Sagdeeva's writings represent two different readings of the dominant Soviet-period linguistic ideology in which being Soviet increasingly meant increasing russification of non-Russian peoples. By contrast, although *Tatar tele* erases social and linguistic difference, it does not represent a simple shift from Russian to Tatar linguistic hegemony, but rather seeks to promote multilingualism, while according a specially elevated status to speakers of Tatar. This textual shift reflects a shift in the social worlds of the people writing and reading these works. Although Tatar-speakers may not necessarily enjoy elevated status in contemporary Tatarstan, they now feel free to speak Tatar in public. And although Russian is still hegemonic in Kazan, multilingualism is indeed valued and small Russian children compete with each other for the opportunity to give the correct answer during Tatar class.

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Notes

[1] See Austin (1991) on Karelian. Vowel harmony, the front-back vowel differentiation in the phonological systems of Turkic languages, for example, are still described according to Russian soft-hard phonological differentiation.

[2] Maksimov (1990: 59).

[3] Gal (1992), Gal & Irvine (1995), Irvine (1993), Irvine & Gal (1994), and Schieffelin et al. (1998).

[4] Maksimov (1990: 60; 65).

[5] Ibid.: 64.

[6] Ibid.: 60.

[7] Ibid.: 62.

[8] Op.cit.: 64.

[9] "*Oni plokho vladejut svoim rodnym jazykom*" (Sagdeeva 1990b: 127).

[10] Ibid. 128.

[11] I should note that by translating *kul'turaly* into Russian or English I am imposing obligatory grammatical categories (adverb and adjective) which do not reflect the non-discreteness of parts of speech in Turkic languages.

[12] Ganiev (1998: 215).

[13] An flaming example of this tendency is to be found in Ayaz Gazizov. 1960. *Tatarskij jazyk*. Kazan: Tatarskoe Knizhnoe Izdatel'stvo.

[14] Before 1990 the area within Tatarstan's current borders was called the Tatar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic or Tatariia.

[15] Nurieva and Jag"farova (1996: 83).

[16] Besides living in Tatarstan, Bashkirs live in the neighboring Republic of Bashkortistan, which lies just to the southeast of Tatarstan, in which Bashkirs are outnumbered by both Russians and Tatars.

[17] op.cit.: 87.

[18] This textbook is no exception among those created for educating Tatarstan children. At present living in Kazan myself, I should add that society is not only presented as remarkably ethnically harmonious in the imagined world of the textbook, but indeed appears that way in actual fact.

[19] op.cit.: 36-7; 43; 42-3; 90.

[20] ibid.: