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Involuntary Trends in Contemporary Teleut?

Denis Tokmashev^{a*}, Ali Ilgın^b, Dina Tokmasheva^a

^aNational Research Tomsk Polytechnic University, 30 Lenin Avenue, Tomsk, 634000, Russia
^bIstanbul University, 196 Ordu Cad., İstanbul, 34459, Turkey

Abstract

The article is devoted to the language situation in the dwelling points of the Teleut, an autochthonous minority Turkic variety of South Siberia. The fieldtrip data collected in 2013-2014 enable to generally conclude about the preservation rate of Teleut in different age groups and basic spheres of its use. A large impact of the predominant Russian language on Teleut is detected resulting in the big amount of lexical borrowings, which have replaced the original lexicon, and the syntactical distortion of the Teleut speech. Asymmetrical Russian-Teleut bilingualism with the prevalence of Russian is claimed the main reason of this phenomenon.

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1. Introduction

Diasystem approach to the analysis of language and the language situation is aimed at identifying the general and specific trends in language change. Since the latter are inseparable from the language situation (structural and functional characteristics of an idiom are largely determined by extra-linguistic reasons), diasystem analysis involves consideration of a number of basic settings: *diaphasic*, which objectifies spatial and temporal framework of the language situation, *diafunctional*, which describes its sociolinguistic aspects and *diastratic*, which registers extra-

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: tdm@tpu.ru (D. Tokmashev).

(language policy, social prestige of the language, pragmatics, orthology and language norm) and intra-linguistic (structural and semantic) changes of the idiom. This approach has been used, in particular, by Yu. V. Kobenko while studying the language situation in Germany (Kobenko, 2013).

By the term “the Teleut language” we mean the language of the Turkic-speaking population of the middle Tom region (ethnographic group of the Bachat Teleuts –payat kizhi ~ tadar kizhi) living in the Belovo district of Kemerovo region. Their language was included in the Redbook and listed among the endangered language list by UNESCO. Because of the lack of sociolinguistic data the separate language forms of the disperse ethnic groups of Teleut origin, who live in Altay Territory (Krai) and the Altay republic (Chumyshand Mountain Altay Teleuts) are not considered. Also the ethno-linguistic Teleut substrate can be postulated with the Turkic-speaking ethnographic groups of the lower Tom (the Tomsk Tatars).

In linguistic literature this idiom is often defined as the “southern dialect of the Altay language” (Baskakov) or “the language of the Teleuts” (Nasilov). Such important sociolinguistic parameters of an idiom as writing system and legislative status are ambiguous in the case of Teleut. Teleut (dialect) was the first written Turkic language of Siberia (Sacred History of the Old and New Testament, 1879). At the moment, despite the publication of dictionaries and textbooks, the Teleut language is not literal, and its demographic and communicative capacities are very small, cf.: “One of the conditions for the recognition of language as literal is the functioning of writing within the circle of regular users of the language” (Burykin, 2001). Nevertheless, ethnic and political authority of the Teleut tribal confederation in Ob and Altay in the XVII-XVIII centuries is historically authentic for the outset of intensive Russian-Teleut language contacts (currently Russian holds the position of macromedia language all over the state in relation to all minority forms of indigenous languages). The end of the XIX century can be taken as the starting point of the diaphase, since the first written sources of the Teleut language date back to this point and can provide the empiric linguistic data to be compared with the contemporary Teleut language.

Diafunctional aspect of the language situation covers the traditional set of sociolinguistics parameters. From this perspective it can be characterized as follows: *quantitatively* it is a multicomponent situation (Teleut and Russian), as well as non-balanced and unipolar (absolute functional predominance of the Russian language); *qualitatively* it is multilingual and heteromorphic, disharmonious and exoglossic. Estimative signs are traditional for a minority language form – Russian serves as the language of the vertical and is void of evaluative connotations, being the L1 language with the overwhelming majority of the Teleuts (as for the younger generation, Russian is mostly the only language they use). At the same time the importance of the native language transmission to the youth is consistently emphasized by the elder speakers, which has a mainly declarative character, since, as noted by V.M. Alpatov “to preserve minority languages of Russia a purpose-oriented governmental policy is required” (Alpatov). Referring to republican Turkic languages of Siberia (Altay, Khakass and Tuvinian), this aspect is in detail disclosed by T.G. Borgoyakova (Borgoyakova, 2002).

Diastratic aspect is closely connected to the above two. On the intralinguistic level of language we can postulate the dissociation of the Turkic lexical and grammatical basis of the Teleut language due to the influence of Russian as the language of the vertical, what we have stated in the previous publication (Tokmashev & Fedotova, 2014), and the trend to diamorphism in the Teleut speech. By the term “diamorphism” we claim the predominant use of lexical and grammatical material of the donating language - Russian. This trend is postulated based on the analysis of field data of 2013-2014, but requires a numerical verification.

2. Discussion

As for the linguistic status of the Teleut language as an independent component of the Siberian Turkic-speaking area, it remains debatable. In the “Red Book of Languages of the Peoples of Russia” it is defined as “the language of the Teleuts” (Nasilov, 2002). The Teleut language is genetically and structurally closest to the Turkic dialects of the southern Altays – the Altai-kizhi and the Telengits, although a number of phonetic and lexical and grammatical features of the language of Teleuts, which possibly bring it closer to the Uighur-Oguz languages of South Siberia, makes it possible to put forward a question of regarding it as an independent Turkic language variety (Fisakova, 1979).

Teleut can be considered the first written dialect of the Altay language after publishing the salient “Grammar of the Altay Language” in 1869 in Kazan, compiled by members of the Altay Christian Mission. Since 1923 the Altai-

kizhi dialect was laid in the basis of the Altay literary language, forasmuch as differences in morphology and vocabulary of the Teleut language made it inconvenient to be used by the Altays. The language of the Teleuts dwelling in the Kemerovo region until recently remained unwritten, and was mostly used in the everyday communication. Graphics and spelling rules of several publications on the Teleut language and folklore in the past decade were not unified, and now they vary from edition to edition depending on the editor's "sense of language".

The term "the Teleuts" is nowadays mostly attributed to the Bachat Teleuts. It can be to a certain extent regarded as exo-ethnonym, because in regular intra-ethnic discourse the Teleuts call themselves either *tadarkiziler*, *tadarlar* 'the Tatar people, the Tatars', while somewhat "official" naming is *tälänätkižiler*, *tälänätter* – 'people from the kindred of Telenget~Telengit~Teleut', which reveals the genetic attribution of the Teleuts and the Telengits of Mountain Altay. Another ethnonym is *payat kižiler*, *payattar* – 'people living on the river of Bachat.' The ancient ethnonym "the Tatars" was used in the Russian empire for many Turkic (and sometimes non-Turkic) peoples, of whom the Khakass, the Shors, the Teleuts and the Chulym Turks preserved this self-naming – *tadar kiži*.

So this article uses the term "the Teleut language." Although genetically linked to the South Altay dialects, which together form the national Altay literary language, Teleut has a clearly defined territorial distribution, without bordering on the Altay, a separate ethnic and social community along with separate writing system used in the sparse publications. So we can postulate the formation of Altay-Teleut linguistic cluster, similarly to Khakass and Chulym Turkic, since the latter is considered an independent language in Turcology.

The classification of Turkic languages is traditionally an occasion for debate because of their long history and a huge distribution area. In the most common classifications built on account of both areal and genetic and typological features, the Teleut language predictably belongs to the same group as the South Altay. N.A. Baskakov attributed it to the Kyrgyz-Kipchak group of the Eastern Xiongnu branch of Turkic languages together with other southern dialects of the Altay language (Baskakov, 1952).

In the classification of Turkic languages of Siberia made by A.M. Shcherbak one of the criteria is the phonetic form of the words 'foot', 'mountain', 'mouth', 'boy, son' and 'cheek'. According to it, the Altay language is represented by two groups of dialects – the southern (Kipchak group) and northern (mixed group) (Shcherbak, 1994). Though the "Kipchak" pronunciation of the words 'mouth' – *oos* and 'cheek' – *d'aak* phonetically do not fully correspond to Teleut *uus* 'mouth' and *jaak* 'cheek', but other distinguishing features match, therefore in the classification of A.M. Shcherbak the Teleut should be referred to the Kipchak group.

The classification of L. Johansson attributes the Teleut dialect to a heterogeneous group of South Siberian Altay Turkic of the North-eastern branch of Turkic languages (Johanson, 1998). On the contrary, O.A. Mudrak according to glottochronologic criteria united Siberian Turkic into a group consisting of 12 languages, splitting into 3 subgroups, the third of which comprises the Kumandy, the Chalkan, the Altay, the Tuba and the Kyrgyz languages (Bayir-ool, et al. 2013). Hypothetically, this subgroup should also include Teleut, since Altay-Teleut lexical differences are not relevant to the core vocabulary (which is a key in glottochronology) shared by Altay and Teleut.

Being isolated from the main body of Southern Altay dialects, Teleut experienced and continues to experience a great influence of the Russian language, which led to the replacement of native lexicon (especially functional words – conjunctions, postpositions and particles) with Russian equivalents in the speech of middle and older generations, because vocabulary is naturally the most labile level of language system. As noted by N.Z. Gadzhieva "consistent contacts of Turkic languages with Russian also contributed to the development of conjunctive tools (e.g. the Tatar language." It is also noted that "all the borrowing in the Turkic languages in terms of word and form building, as a rule, are subject to the inner rules of the Turkic languages" (Gadzhieva, 1997).

Our study confirms the involutory trends in Teleut – Russian lexical borrowings in Teleut is accompanied by morphological changes, traditional for Turkic languages. In addition the SVO sentence pattern obviously dominates over traditional Turkic SOV pattern, which can also be explained by the influence of the Russian language.

So there are two main aspects of the impact of the Russian language on Teleut: 1) lexical borrowings; 2) syntactic influence.

Basic vocabulary of Teleut is typically Turkic with a thin layer of Mongolian and Tungusic words, which is principally characteristic for the South Siberian Turkic languages (Gadzhieva, 1997). Since the XIX century the Teleuts of the Bachat river exist as an ethno-linguistic enclave in the Russian-speaking environment, which logically resulted in the Russification of the Teleut vocabulary. As for the analysis of the informants' speech of informants,

the words borrowed from Russian are primarily the names of household items, utensils, clothing, words related to social and spiritual sphere, etc., which appeared along with the denoted Russian cultural phenomena and got assimilated in the Teleut language. They can be called stable borrowings, e.g. **the names of buildings and their parts:** *škol* ‘school’, *agret* ‘fence’, *kantor* ‘office, administrative building’, *serkva* ‘church’, *čulan* ‘barn, stable (for domestic animals)’ < Rus. *chulan* ‘toolshed, closet’, *stene* ‘wall’, *lapka* ‘shop’, *agarot* ‘vegetable garden’, *ambar* ‘barn’, *pol* ‘floor’; **the names of utensils, tools, household items and materials:** *skala* ‘rolling pin’, *grebelka* ‘comb’, *pilka* ‘fork’, *loško* ‘spoon’, *sastup* ‘spade’, *napalat* ‘loft, mezzanine’, *prastle* ‘spinning wheel’, *litopko* ‘scythe’, *molotok* ‘hammer’, *karit* ‘basin’, *čečke* ‘hatchet’, *ser’anke* ‘matches’ < originally ‘sulfur matches’, *pečke* ‘stove, oven’, *stol* ‘table’, *tabar* ‘cloth’, *tosko* ‘board’ etc. ; **the names of food and clothing:** *alaj’y* ‘pancakes’, *kampet* ‘candies, sweets’, *kalačik* ‘sweet round-shaped bun’, *pakle* ‘waffle’, *sakar* ‘sugar’, *teste* ‘dough’, *tobrok* ‘curds, cottage cheese’, *plaat* ‘headscarf’, *čuluk* ‘stockings’, *sapok* ‘boots’, *štan* ‘pants, trousers’, *kartus* ‘cap’, *patinke* ‘shoes’, *šarabar* ‘pants’, *kupajka* ‘cotton-wool jacket’, *pima* ‘woolen boots’ etc. ; **the names of the horse’s harness:** *kunut* ‘whip’, *požo* ‘reins’, *tuya* ‘arc’, *komyt* ‘collar’, *padkok* ‘horseshoe’, *šleje* ‘breeching’ and so on; the names of plants and animals: *aryš* ‘rye’, *kartoko* ‘potatoes’, *markop* ‘carrots’, *ogurčyn* ‘cucumbers’, *kabysta* ‘cabbages’, *kanepke* ‘hemp’, *tupka* ‘pumpkin’, *čöblönkö* ‘chicken’, *parbijke* ‘sparrow’, *klaapy* ‘bug’, *kyzynka* ‘cat’, *tölnök* ‘calf’ and so on.

We have also detected some Russian-Teleut semantic doublets when a borrowed Russian word replaced the traditional one or is used along with it. E.g.: *kalbak* (trad.) ~ *loško* ‘spoon’, *taka* (trad.) ~ *patkok* ‘horseshoe’, *pile* (trad.) ~ *sem’ja* ‘family’, *tura* (trad.) ~ *korot* ‘town’, *kendir* (trad.) ~ *kanepke* ‘hemp’, *masqa* (trad.) ~ *molotok* ‘hammer’, *čaq* (trad.) ~ *öj* (trad.) ~ *preme* ‘time’. The last word is used in Teleut in the broadest, generalized sense.

Such words like *porsyk* ‘badger’, *qalaš* ‘bread’, *pelmen* ‘dumplings’ can be as well borrowed from Russian or represent the traditional Turkic lexical stems and be Turkic loanwords in the Russian language.

Along with the above-given words we noted the abundance of Russian words and expressions, which are occasionally used by some speakers, not being conventionalized loanwords in Teleut, e.g. *nasok* ‘socks’, *blinalar* ‘pancakes’, *akotnik* ‘hunter’. As occasional borrowings we can claim those words, which are pronounced in Russian, because their denotations belong to Russian reality, but which have not undergone morphophonemic changes, for example, *samalyot* ‘aircraft’, *mašina* ‘machine, automobile’, *patalok* ‘ceiling’, in contrast to fully “domesticated” lexical units like *kartoko*, *lapka*, *stene* etc. This conclusion can still be ambiguous, since some Russian words originally sound Turkic enough to be borrowed as they are.

3. Conclusion

This brief introduction to the contemporary state of Teleut is to open a series of papers, in which the living speech of Teleuts should be thoroughly analyzed in order to point out more evidence of language decay and involution. Within the framework of this introductory article the contact-induced language change in Teleut can possibly be regarded as “involution”, though a relatively big amount of lexical borrowings, should they even replace the original nominations, does not necessarily signalize a language decay, especially in case of introduction of a new word along with the object it denotes: in this case this is rather a sign of vocabulary expansion, than involution. To prove the involutionary trends in Teleut a more profound study is needed, though in the situation of being functionally dominated over, language decay and involution seem predictable enough.

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