

Turkic Languages

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Contents

Turkic Languages, Volume 18, 2014, Numbers 1/2

Editorial note by Lars Johanson	1
Obituary	
Abdurishid Yakup: In memoriam Masahiro Shōgaito sensei (April 1942– March 2014)	3
Articles	
Lars Johanson: A synopsis of Turkic volitional moods	19
Károly, László: Deverbal nominals in Altaic: In search of a framework (not only) for reconstruction	54
Delio Vania Proverbio: On some graphotactic rules exhibited by the Old Turkic <i>Irk Bitig</i> text: A case of incipient degraphemization?	73
Wolfgang Scharlipp: Einige türkische Wörter zu ‘Bildung’ und ‘Glauben’ im manjurischen <i>Fünfsprachenspiegel</i>	92
Matthias Kappler: An unedited sketch of Turkish grammar (1711) by the Venetian <i>giovane di lingua</i> Pietr’Antonio Rizzi	104
Henryk Jankowski: Kazakh linguistics in Kazakhstan: An outline	128
Monika Rind-Pawlowski: Text types and evidentiality in Dzungar Tuvan	159
Beste Kamali: Beyond morphosyntax: Interrogative intonation and its role in Turkish	189
Zsuzsanna Olach: Translational methods used for rendering special characteristics of Hebrew interrogatives in Karaim Bible translations	207
Mine Güven: The periphrastic necessitative construction in Cypriot Turkish: Conservation and contact in collaboration	229
Öner Özçelik: An antisymmetric analysis of Turkish relative clauses: Implications from prosody	247
Solveiga Armoskaite & Deniz Aysegul Kutlu: Turkish <i>m</i> -reduplication: A case of simulative number	271
Report	
Irina Nevskaya & Saule Tazhibayeva: Turkic languages of Kazakhstan: Problems and research perspectives	289

Report

Turkic languages of Kazakhstan: Problems and research perspectives

Irina Nevskaya & Saule Tazhibayeva

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The paper reports about first results of a project of international cooperation between German and Kazakhstani Turcologists on “Interaction of Turkic Languages and Cultures in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan” funded by the Volkswagen Foundation.

This project is devoted to Kazakhstani Turkic languages. Kazakhstan is a multiethnic country. More than 130 different ethnic groups live on the territory of Kazakhstan, among which one-third are representatives of Turkic ethnicities. A number of their native languages are moribund. In Kazakhstan, processes are underway of mutual influence and interpenetration (or, possibly, even of partial mixing) of Turkic languages belonging to different classification groups within the Turkic family (Kipchak, Karluk, Oguz, Sayan-Altai).

The primary goal of our project is to obtain data on self-identification, linguistic behavior, language attitudes, etc. of Turkic ethnicities in Kazakhstan. These data are collected by means of a sociolinguistic questionnaire we have composed for this purpose and presented to representatives of various Turkic ethnic groups in Kazakhstan.

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0. Introduction

Kazakhstan is a multiethnic and multi-religious country, with more than 130 representatives of different ethnic groups (Sulejmenova & Šajmerdenova & Smagulova & Akanova 2007²). One-third of the population consists of Turkic ethnic groups speaking 25 Turkic languages (Axmetžanova 2005; Sulejmenova & Smagulova 2005; Altyzbekova 2006a, 2006b; Sulejmenova & Šajmerdenova & Smagulova & Akanova 2007²; Report of the independent expert on minority issues. Mission to Kazakhstan. 2009; Agentstvo Respubliki Kazakhstan po statistike 2010; Nevskaya & Tazhibayeva 2014a, 2014b).

Some of these ethnic groups came to Kazakhstan as refugees from various conflicts, or they were exiled to Kazakhstan during the Stalin era in the course of the so-called deportation; some migrated there in search for work, while some groups represent the indigenous population of this area.

During the years of independence, a pattern for interethnic and interreligious tolerance has been worked out and successfully established in the republic. The prestige of the Kazakh language as the state language is increasing in the society. This factor objectively stimulates interaction between the Kazakh language and other Turkic languages in Kazakhstan. Our research in the framework of the international cooperative project “Interaction of Turkic Languages and Cultures in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan” supported by the Volkswagen Foundation deals with the sociolinguistic situation of Turkic ethnic groups in Kazakhstan.

1. Language situation in Kazakhstan

During Soviet times, the number of people belonging to other ethnicities than Kazakh was greater than the Kazakh population of the Republic. The Kazakh language and culture were neither dominant nor venerated. However, it was the state language of the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic while Russian was the language of interethnic communication not only of Slavic groups, but also of all the rest, and it had a strong influence on the Kazakhstani social and cultural life. The majority of the Kazakhs were fluent in Russian. The younger generation even began to forget their native language. There were only a few Kazakh schools in the republic where the Kazakh language was taught. The Russian language dominated in almost all spheres of life, while the Kazakh language was driven to the social margins.

After the Republic of Kazakhstan became an independent state, the Kazakh language had to establish itself as the state language in hard competition with Russian (which is still considered to be an official language in Kazakhstan). Kazakh is now recognized as the state language according to the constitution, while Russian is an official language, and English is supposed to be used as a language of international communication (State Program of Trilingualism, 2010). The usage of Kazakh has increased among both Kazakhs and non-Kazakhs. The peculiarity of the language situation in modern Kazakhstan has been discussed in research by W. Fierman (2006); H. Jankowski (2012). While this Kazakh revival is going slowly, there have been serious changes in the status of the state language during the past twenty years of independence. Many middle-aged and elderly Russians will probably never learn Kazakh; however, young Russians as well as Turkic-speaking people, especially the elder generations, are fluent in Kazakh. At the present stage of development of Kazakhstani society, bilingualism is gradually turning into multilingualism. One of the most important strategic goals of the language policy of Kazakhstan is that the population should speak several languages: Kazakh, Russian and English. Kazakhstan is currently implementing overall modernization of its education system

and embedding the multilingualism policy into the educational process (Yeskel-diyeva & Tazhibayeva & Zhaksylykbaevna 2015).

2. Turkic ethnic Groups in Kazakhstan

The Turkic-speaking community is the largest in Kazakhstan. Representatives of 25 Turkic languages live in Kazakhstan (<http://www.eng.stat.kz>). The majority of Turkic speakers in Kazakhstan are multilingual. They are fluent in their native language, in Kazakh and in Russian. This especially applies to such Turkic ethnicities as Uzbeks, Uyghurs, Azeris, and Turks.

There had been 26 Turkic ethnic groups until recently. Unfortunately, the Tofalar language has disappeared from the linguistic map of Kazakhstan (<http://www.eng.stat.kz>).

The need for linguistic documentation of the Kazakhstani Turkic language world is of great importance. Turkic languages and their varieties have kept some archaic features and developed innovative ones. Innovative features have emerged through contacts with other languages of Turkic origin, such as Kazakh, Kirgiz, Uzbek, Tatar, or languages of non-Turkic origin such as Russian. Code shifting is taking place very easily. Turkic speakers are using elements of their native linguistic codes while speaking Kazakh or Russian; they easily switch languages during conversation.

We not only need data from well-established Turkic languages, but also from less known Turkic varieties (see such understudied Turkish idioms as Ahiska, Hemshilli, Laz, etc.), endangered languages (Shor, Karaim, Krimchak), languages strongly influenced by contacts with Kazakh and Russian (Karakalpak, Karachay, Balkar, Tatar, Nogay, etc.).

Speakers of many Turkic languages and their varieties in Kazakhstan were separated from the main bulk of their speech communities mainly during the deportation from the Caucasus in 1944. Some Turkic ethnic groups were isolated from their main historical area already in 1935–1937 when collective farms were created and the private property of wealthy peasants (e.g. Azeris, Kumyks) was nationalized in the Soviet Union. Some were exiled to Kazakhstan in 1944, e.g. Turkish ethnic groups (Ahiska, Hemshilli, Laz, etc.), Karaims, Krimchaks, Karachays, Balkars; some migrated to Kazakhstan even earlier (Tatars, Uzbeks). It is important to note that practically all the Turkic groups living in Kazakhstan have titular territory elsewhere (either as an independent statehood or an autonomous unit within a larger state).

2.1. Reasons of migration of Turkic ethnic groups to Kazakhstan

According to our database, the main reasons why Turkic-speaking people came to Kazakhstan are:

- living side by side for centuries and mutual migrations (Uzbeks, Uyghurs and Kirgiz),

- deportations of Kumyks and Azeris in 1935 to 1937 during the collectivization period,
- deportations of Turkic ethnic groups in 1944 from the Caucasus and the Crimea (Karachays, Balkars, Karaims, Krymçaks and Crimean Tatars as well as Turks),
- industrialization during the Second World War, and the *Virgin Lands* campaign during the 1950s and 1960s that were connected with work migration of millions of people of various ethnicities (of Turkic ethnic groups in Kazakhstan, mainly Chuvash and Shor populations),
- mixed marriages (Altay, Khakas, Yakut),
- work migration in the post-Soviet period (Karakalpak, Nogay, Kirgiz, Turkish people from Turkey).

2.2. Statistic data concerning Turkic ethnic groups in Kazakhstan

There are 26 Turkic ethnic groups in Kazakhstan, according to the data presented by the Statistics Agency of the RK: <http://www.eng.stat.kz>, see Table 1. We see that the number of people belonging to the various ethnicities has changed during the last decades.

	1970	1979	1989	1999	2009
Total population in RK	13,026,274	14,709,508	16,222,324	14,981,281	16,009,597
Nationalities:					
1. Kazakh	4,228,367	5,282,481	6,486,029	8,011,452	10,096,763
2. Azeri	57,607	73,240	88,887	78,325	85,292
3. Altay	575	630	675	462	221
4. Balkar	2,714	2,258	2,926	2,079	1,798
5. Bashkir	21,500	32,577	41,060	23,247	17,263
6. Khakass	401	475	575	355	223
7. Chuvash	22,871	22,310	21,717	11,864	7,301
8. Dolgan	17	18	56	25	3
9. Gagaus	772	752	953	678	493
10. Yakut	175	438	303	115	119
11. Karaim	50	33	33	28	23
12. Karakalpak	463	620	1,357	1,497	2,828
13. Karachay	2,447	2,082	2,038	1,400	995
14. Kirgiz	9,612	9,352	13,718	10,925	23,274
15. Krimchak	42	87	61	20	35
16. Kumyk	554	873	1,700	643	481
17. Nogay	155	236	539	350	276
18. Tatar	286,878	314,065	322,338	249,052	204,229
19. Crimean Tatar	2,023	834	3,125	1,007	1,532
20. Shor	215	381	382	212	96
21. Tofa	6	14	0	29	0
22. Tuvan	85	182	129	35	37

23. Turkish	18,377	25,718	49,219	78,711	97,015
24. Turkmen	3,265	2,241	3,716	1,733	2,234
25. Uzbek	216,258	262,960	330,417	370,765	456,997
26. Uyghur	120,622	147,676	181,155	210,377	224,713

According to the results of the Kazakh national census of 2009, there are no longer Tofas in the republic. Thus, representatives of 25 Turkic ethnic groups live in modern Kazakhstan.

2.3. The most numerous Turkic groups in Kazakhstan

The most numerous among the Turkic groups are the Uzbeks, Uyghurs, Tatars, Turks, and Azeri. They mostly live in the south of Kazakhstan in Almaty, Jambyl and southern Kazakhstan regions. The history of their settlement in Kazakhstan is unclear, which is also true for the majority of Kazakhstani Turkic ethnic groups. There are no special studies about how many of the Uzbeks, Kyrgyz and Uyghurs in Kazakhstan live in the places of their ancestors, and how many came through labor migration, or have not been registered. In particular, the number of Uyghurs living in Kazakhstan has increased because of refugees from China (<http://www.eng.stat.kz>).

2.3.1. The Uzbek

The Uzbek population is stable; the people remain in the country. Their communities have lived in Kazakhstan for centuries. The population of Uzbek communities has increased since 1991 (<http://www.eng.stat.kz>). They are preserving their culture, traditions and language. They have a native language education system: 58 primary and middle schools, mostly in the southern regions of the country (<http://www.edu.gov.kz>), a national theater in the city of Shymkent, and mass media such as TV and radio broadcasting. Uzbeks are multilingual (Uzbek-Kazakh-Russian).

2.3.2. The Uyghurs

The Uyghurs are a Turkic people who have historically inhabited the Xinjiang province of present-day China but immigrated to Central Asia over the course of several centuries. The percentage of Uyghur people in modern Kazakhstan has increased to 6.8%. (<http://www.eng.stat.kz>). They preserve their culture, traditions and language. Unlike the Uzbeks, the Uyghurs are well integrated into the intellectual and cultural elites of Kazakhstan. There are 63 Uyghur language primary and middle schools, of which 15 are purely Uyghur (<http://www.edu.gov.kz>); there is a Uyghur Studies Institute within the Kazakhstani Academy of Science, a national theatre in Almaty. The Uyghurs are mostly located in the Almaty, southern Kazakhstan and Jambyl regions.

2.3.3. The Tatar community

The Tatar community in Kazakhstan has declined. The number of Tatars has decreased by 18.0% (<http://www.eng.stat.kz>). They are the most urbanized among the Turkic groups in Kazakhstan, largely assimilated by either the Kazakhs or the Russians. The Tatars live in all the big cities and are well integrated into scientific and art elite of the society. The largest community is in Semey, in the eastern part of Kazakhstan. Unlike the Uzbeks and the Uyghurs, the Tatars do not have Tatar language education in Kazakhstan, and they do not make a claim for it. However, they have Sunday schools and cultural centers in bigger cities.

2.4. Small Turkic ethnic groups in Kazakhstan

There are several small Turkic ethnic groups in Kazakhstan, e.g. Tuvans, Shor people, Karaims, Krimčaks, Ahyska, Laz, and Hemshilli Turks.

2.4.1. Tuvans in Kazakhstan

According to Monica Rind-Pawłowski's information, obtained from Chinese Tuvans during her fieldwork in China, there are still many Tuvans living in Kazakhstan (M. Rind-Pawłowski, personal communication). Before the October Revolution, their settlement area stretched along Lake Balkhash. After the revolution, many Tuvans left Kazakhstan, and their current location is unknown. According to information from their relatives in China, there are several hundred Tuvans living in Kazakhstan. In May 2015, a special expedition was organized with the purpose of finding the Tuvans in eastern Kazakhstan and clarifying their ethnic identity, language and cultural background. We crossed thousand of kilometers to find the Tuvan tracks in eastern Kazakhstan, reaching the most distant points of the region up to the borderline with China. Unfortunately, it was an unsuccessful trip. According to statistical data from 2009, the number of Tuvans is 37 persons, however, in our database only one Tuvan has been interviewed. One of the important issues for us is to locate the Kazakhstani Tuvans.

2.4.2. AhiskaTurks

The other ethnic group of our special research interest is the Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks, who were deported from Georgia to Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kirgizia) in 1944. After their deportation from Georgia, their new settlement areas were the southern regions of Kazakhstan (the Shimkent and Jambyl regions). Unlike other deported peoples, the Ahiska (also called Meskhetian Turks) could not return to their old homes. Georgia had given their original area of settlement to Armenians. Thus, in 2000, in order to prevent civil war with Armenia, tens of thousands of Ahiska Turks were again expelled from Georgia.

According to statistical data, the number of Turks in Kazakhstan is increasing (<http://www.eng.stat.kz>).

Analysis of the language, culture and history of the modern Turkic peoples, including sub-ethnic groups of the Turkish diaspora up to the present time, has been carried out inconsistently. Kazakh researchers have studied the history (Toqtabay 2006), ethno-political processes (Galiyeva 2010), and ethnic and cultural development of the Turkish diaspora in Kazakhstan (Ibraševa 2010).

Foreign researchers have devoted their studies to ethnic peculiarities of Kazakhstan (see Dave 2007). Peculiar features of the Akhiska Turks living in the US are presented in the article by Ömer Avci (www.nova.edu./ssss/QR/QR17/avci/ PDF).

Specific features of the language and culture of the Turkish diaspora in Kazakhstan have not been the topic of special investigation. Before this project, there have been neither studies on the features of the Turkish language, with its sub-ethnic dialects, nor documentation of endangered variants of Turkish. The data of the pre-sociological surveys show that the Kazakhstani Turks identify themselves as Akhiska, Hemshilli, Laz, and Terekeme Turks. Unable to return to their homeland in Georgia, Akhiska, Hemshilli, Laz and Terekeme were scattered around many countries. Language variants of these sub-ethnic groups are endangered, or have already come to the point where there is a need for their revitalization.

The situation is aggravated by the fact that all the variants of the Turkish language in Kazakhstan are unwritten. In written communication, these groups use the Standard Turkish orthography. In this regard, it is necessary to immediately investigate, document, fully explore and give a scientific description of various variants of Turkish. Their separation from the main ethnic array led, in particular, to preservation of their language and certain elements of traditional Turkish culture. The language of Kazakhstani Turks has been largely preserved in the form in which it existed before the Kemalist reforms in the Republic of Turkey. At present, we observe rapid processes of cultural assimilation of Kazakhstani Turkish (to Standard Turkish, Kazakh and Russian-speaking culture). Language and culture, retained by the older generation, need to be investigated and fixed by researchers. Documenting the linguistic peculiarities of different dialects of the Turkish diaspora in Kazakhstan is one of the important tasks of Turkic studies in Kazakhstan (Nevskaya & Tazhibayeva 2014a, 2014b). It should also be stressed that Turkish representatives consider Kazakhstan the most comfortable country among all the Central Asian states for preserving their culture and language (information from interviews during field research in southern Kazakhstan (Taraz, Shymkent) in March 2014, September 2014 and the Almaty region in June and August 2015). Thus, the study of the language, culture and self-identification of the Turkish diaspora in Kazakhstan is of double interest: on the one hand, from the point of view of studying the archaic forms of the Turkish language, perhaps lost in the historic homeland; on the other hand, in terms of capturing and documenting the threatened cultural heritage.

The globalization processes, the impact of the standard Turkish language via satellite TV and other mass media are destroying a unique culture and language of the Kazakhstani Turks with their various sub-ethnic groups. At the same time, the rise of national consciousness of the Turks and their desire to preserve their language and

culture for future generations means that there is a social demand for the documentation of these languages. Documentation will have not only scientific, but also great social importance.

Today, their language and culture are being subjected to the depletion of the speakers themselves because of their high willingness to assimilate in order to protect themselves from further discrimination, or, even, extinction (field research in Taraz, March of 2014; southern Kazakhstan, July 2014, Almaty region, June 2015). They have identified themselves as Turks in interviews taken in the framework of this survey.

At this point it is worth mentioning that a Turkish Center was founded in 1991 in Almaty, which proclaimed Turkey as the protector of the Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turkish groups, and Turkish as the “sole standard language” of the Kazakhstani Turkish speakers. They have Sunday schools and cultural centers in bigger cities. An International weekly newspaper “AHISKA” is published in Almaty (contact email address: ahiska60@mai.ru). Standard Turkish is taught at schools as an optional subject.

2.4.3. Shor population in Kazakhstan

After World War Two, the era of labor migration to Kazakhstan began. People were recruited from all over the Soviet Union to work for the reclamation of new land and in metallurgical factories. In this way, some Yakut, Dolgan, Shor, and Chuvash people came to Kazakhstan, and their descendants still live there.

Rind-Pawlawski’s research data for her master’s thesis conducted in 2004 in Mountainous Shoria presented voice recordings of Shors, who told her about their work experience in Kazakhstan. The data also include some of their children’s recordings about their parents’ time in Kazakhstan. It is worth mentioning at this point that Shor is spoken fluently by approximately only 700 people. The Shor language is under serious threat. It is of particular interest to examine the language skills of 96 Shors living in Kazakhstan and possibly stimulate activities aimed at preserving their language and culture (<http://www.eng.stat.kz>).

During our field research in the Pavlodar region (May 2015), we interviewed several Shor ladies. One Shor lady had married an Azeri man and speaks fluent Azeri. All the rest are monolingual in Russian. According to their information, the young generation of Kazakhstani Shors migrated back to Russia in search for work. Many Shors have assimilated into Russian culture due to mixed marriages. They do not know and do not speak Shor; however, they express regret about losing their native language and culture.

2.4.4. Krimchaks and Karaims

Languages of these small ethnic groups, mentioned in the statistical data, are of particular research interest. Information on the reasons for their presence in Kazakhstan is lacking. These communities are Jewish by their religion. It is unclear whether they

came in the course of the Stalinist deportations to Kazakhstan, or fled voluntarily to become migrant workers even before anti-Jewish persecutions. Karaim and Krimchak are spoken only by a few hundred speakers worldwide, and their existence is severely threatened. It would be of particular interest to examine the language skills of the members of these groups and possibly to encourage measures to preserve their language and culture.

3. The International research project “Interaction of Turkic Languages and Cultures in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan”

3.1. Objectives of the project and cooperation partners

A project carried out in Germany at the Free Berlin University as well as at the University of Frankfurt, and at the Eurasian University in Astana (the main cooperative partner in Kazakhstan), and at Taraz State University in Kazakhstan by a group of German and Kazakh researchers aims at investigating the sociolinguistic situation of non-Kazakh Turkic ethnic groups in the Republic of Kazakhstan. The heads of the project are Irina Nevskaya and Claus Schönig (Germany), and Saule Tazhibayeva and Nurila Shaimerdinova (Kazakhstan). The project is financed by the Volkswagen Foundation. This article will present some preliminary results of this project, which began on March 1, 2014. Some issues of the project were referred to in Nevskaya & Tazhibayeva 2014a and 2014b.

Objectives of the projects are as follows:

To clarify the sociolinguistic situation in Kazakhstan with respect to Turkic languages present in the country, which includes the following issues:

- social strategies of Turkic ethnic groups in the new conditions of independent Kazakhstani statehood (opening of previously closed ethnic groups, free choice of the linguistic medium of education for their children, etc.);
- assimilation processes vs. retention of the ethnic identity, as well as the main factors influencing these processes;
- ethnic vs. civic factors in the mass-consciousness of the Turkic ethnic groups in modern Kazakhstan; the role of state policies and that of spontaneously developing tendencies;
- reasons for increase and decrease in numbers of certain Turkic ethnic groups during the independence period (such as the growth of Karaims and decrease in number of Siberian Turks).
- documentation of especially endangered, or unstudied Turkic varieties.

The project is important for Turcology and sociology in Kazakhstan especially due to the following factors:

- At the university level, questions regarding the Turkic ethnicities in Kazakhstan are increasingly coming to the fore. Three years ago, departments of Turkic studies were organized both at the Gumilev Eurasian National University (ENU) in Astana and at the Al-Farabi Kazakh National University in

Almaty. During the first three years after the start of their programs, the focus of research and teaching has been almost exclusively on Old Turkic and Kazakh studies. Now, research should also be extended to the linguistic and cultural peculiarities of all Turkic languages, with special attention to small Turkic ethnic groups in Kazakhstan. The historical, anthropological and linguistic information, which is to be obtained in the course of the cooperative German-Kazakh project, can be included in the curriculum of Turkic studies courses.

- Sociolinguistic research in the first two decades of independence was aimed at investigating the situation of the state language in Kazakhstan in the conditions of its rivalry with the Russian language. The languages of minorities were practically not taken into account.

3.2. Questionnaire

In order to reveal the linguistic attitudes of the Kazakhstani Turkic groups regarding their native language, Kazakh and Russian, and to show their language uses in everyday life, their ethnic/social identity as indicated in their passports and as defined by themselves, their ethnic identity and their linguistic identity, and their acceptance of hybrid identities, among other inquiries, we composed a questionnaire and presented it to representatives of various Turkic ethnic groups in Kazakhstan. It is presented to respondents in either Kazakh or Russian.

The questionnaire includes questions on the following main issues:

Part 1.

- A. General information and ethnic self-identification, ethnicity and nationality as noted in the passport (the respondent, his/her parents, spouse and closest friends)
- B. Educational status and the language of education (the respondent, his/her parents).
- C. Profession
- D. Place of residence
- E. The history of the family's migrations (in case the respondent, or his/her parents were not born in Kazakhstan)

Part 2. Language proficiency

- F. The degree of language proficiency, the language of communication in the family, native language use in communication between different generations of the family; language of education of the respondent; language use in different situations of oral communication and in other situations of language use (books, mass media, etc.); possibilities of education in the native language, support of the language by the state (schools, media, etc.), language attitudes (what language one should speak to children in the family, in kindergarten, what language should be the language of education at different levels; should children learn their native language at school, etc.); mass media and the native language,

what factors are most decisive ones in the definition of ethnicity (language, religion, traditions, etc.).

Part 3. Interethnic relationship

G. Most frequent mixed marriages between the people of what ethnic groups, nationality in mixed marriages, attitudes of the community to mixed marriages.

Part 4. Culture

H. Traditions of the ethnic group, problems with keeping to traditions, changes in the traditions in recent times.

Part 5. Religion (religion of the respondent, education of religion leaders, religious holidays, etc.)

Part 6. Literature (knowledge of oral traditions, of modern literature in the native language and of Kazakh literature).

The results of this survey are being put into an electronic databank, evaluated and made accessible to a broader public via the Internet. See an extract of the questionnaire below (Figure 1): Part 2, subdivision 3 “Proficiency in different languages”: native (E-3a), Kazakh (E-3б), Russian (E-3в), as well as up to three further languages (E-г-e). Proficiency in additional languages other than the native tongue, Kazakh and Russian is especially important for ethnic groups that came to Kazakhstan from other regions. We have added English translations of stimuli as notes after the figure.

E-3 Тілді меңгеру дәрежелігі

Степень владения языками

	E-3a Ана Родной	E-3б казак Казакск.	E-3в Орыс Русский	E-3г баска другой	E-3д баска другой	E-3е баска другой
1. Еркін сөйлеймін Говорю свободно						
2. Қиналып сөйлесемін Говорю с затруднениями						
3. Сөйлемеймін Не говорю						
4. Еркін оқимын Читаю свободно						
5. Қиналып оқимын Читаю с затруднениями						
6. Оқымаймын Не читаю						
7. Еркін түсінемін Понимаю свободно						
8. Қиналып түсінемін Понимаю с затруднениями						
9. Түсінбеймін Не понимаю						
10. Еркін жазамын Пишу свободно						
11. Қиналып жазамын						

Пишу с затруднениями						
12. Жазбаймын						
Не пишу						

Figure 1. An extract of the questionnaire

Notes. 1. I speak (the language) fluently. 2. I have difficulties expressing myself (in this language). 3. I do not speak (the language). 4. I read without difficulties (written texts in the language). 5. I have difficulties while reading (written texts in the language). 6. I cannot read (written texts in the language). 7. I understand everything (when people speak this language). 8. I have difficulties understanding (when people speak the language). 9. I do not understand (when people speak the language). 10. I can write (in this language). 11. I have difficulties writing (in this language). 12. I cannot write (in this language).

3.3. Collection of data and first results

2013–2014–2015: the Eurasian University decided that students of the Turcological Department can gather their professional practical experience working as volunteers in the framework of this international project. They were given 6 weeks to collect data using the questionnaire. 2214 interviews have already been put into the online database and are in the process of being analyzed.

In addition, the questionnaire can be answered by any person using the online mask with questions in both Kazakh and Russian. According to our preliminary analysis of the first results, 29.5% (590) of the respondents were Tatars, 21.7% (434) Uzbeks, 16.4% (328) Azeri, 11.5% (231) Turks, 4.3% (86) Uyghurs, 4.1% (83) Bashkir, etc. (see <http://tuyrki.weebly.com/>).

3.4. The role of Turkic ethnic groups in the Kazakhstani education system

In modern Kazakhstan, similar to Soviet times, there is native language education only for Uzbeks and Uyghurs. There are 58 schools that perform their entire teaching in Uzbek, as well as 15 purely Uyghur schools. Other Turkic languages such as Tatar and Turkish can best be learned in voluntary Sunday schools as well as in classes of extracurricular activities.

There have been no studies prior to this project on how many small ethnic groups want native language education for their children. Schools with teaching in Kazakh or Russian are preferred by education-oriented parents, as university education takes place exclusively in Kazakh or Russian, and the passing of a language test is an admission requirement. There is no evidence on how high the level of knowledge of their native languages is. Particularly for the smaller ethnic groups, it is possible that their native language has been replaced partially or completely by a more dominant language.

In our survey, the preference is given to the Kazakh language. 49.3% of interviewees choose Kazakh as the language of education in the first year at school; 35.3% prefer their native language, while 15% consider Russian to be the most preferable language of education at school. In answers to the question “Which language should be the language of education in primary schools?” the preference is also giv-

en to Kazakh—59.2% and 22.8% to the native language. 57.2% of our interviewees consider that it is also more useful to receive secondary education in Kazakh, 21.9% in Russian, and 19.8% of respondents want their children to receive education in their native language.

63.4% of the interviewees want to study their native language at schools as a special subject. 20.5% consider that there is no necessity to study the native language while 16.1% of the respondents have problems giving an answer. See <http://tuyrki.weebly.com>.

4. Conclusion

The mentality of ethnic groups living in Kazakhstan combined with well-balanced national politics, allowed a specific culture of non-conflicted behavior to form in this heterogeneous society. As a result, the cultural and linguistic diversity in independent Kazakhstan has not become a factor for separation and disintegration of society, but on the contrary, it promotes its enrichment and successful sustainable development.

Kazakhstan presents a very interesting area for studying Turkic communities who came to this territory for various reasons. It is important to examine the real sociolinguistic situation in Kazakhstan with respect to Turkic languages present in the country.

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