

Linguistic purism, language shift, and contact-induced change in Tatar

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## Abstract

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This dissertation examines both the causes and symptoms of language shift using the specific case of Tatar in present-day Tatarstan.

In Chapter One, Tatar is shown to be an example of potentially reversible “gradual language death,” where Russian is encroaching on Tatar functional domains. Bilingual Tatar speakers have a range of styles that can be organized according to level of language mixing, with pure Tatar on one end, pure Russian on the other end, and “mixed” styles in between. Members of the “Tatar Social Club”, young Tatar-Russian bilinguals, are carving out a new Tatar functional domain in an overwhelmingly Russian urban setting.

Chapter Two shows how the language ideology that I call the “Tatar discourse of purity” is a significant part of the construction of the post-Soviet Tatar identity. “Pure” Tatar is implicitly defined as Tatar without Russian influence; influences from languages not perceived as threats can be interpreted as congruent with the post-Soviet Tatar identity. This language ideology is expressed through purification movements commonly found in post-colonial contexts, most notably through orthographic and lexical reform.

In Chapter Three I examine one mixed style of Tatar where speakers unconsciously use Russian words in otherwise entirely Tatar discourse – a sign of language attrition. These

Russian words are all metalinguistic, and structure and comment on discourse. Many of them retain their Russian grammatical requirements, and this Tatar style can then be analyzed as a “composite” of Tatar and Russian. This form of language mixing and the structural alterations that go along with it indicate a previously unrecognized pathway of language attrition and language influence.

Chapter Four shows that the code-mixing of discourse-pragmatic words both explains and gives motivation for lexical and structural borrowing in other sociolinguistically similar contact situations. I present a three-stage model that, while innovative, also derives from general linguistic principles, including theories of discourse markers and of grammaticalization.

In Chapter Five, I synthesize the findings and theories of the previous four chapters, and suggest the ways in which they can be applied in other avenues of linguistic inquiry.

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This dissertation is for my parents,  
without whose support, on every level,  
none of this would have been possible.

# Linguistic purism, language shift, and contact-induced change in Tatar

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