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**REGIONAL PECULIARITIES OF SPOKEN RUSSIAN LANGUAGE  
(REPUBLIC OF KALMYKIA CASE)**

Tamara Esenova (a)\*, Danara Suseeva (b), Galina Esenova (c)

\*Corresponding author

(a) Kalmyk State University, Elista, 358000, Russia, esenova\_ts@mail.ru, tel. 89093990921

(b) Kalmyk State University, Elista, 358000, Russia, suseeva@gmail.com, tel.89275907904

(c) Kalmyk State University, Elista, 358000, Russia, esenina.gb@gmail.com, tel. 89064379218

*Abstract*

The article is devoted to the regional peculiarities of the spoken Russian language. The problem is considered in the context of the Republic of Kalmykia. The relevance of the topic is determined by the dynamics of the linguistic situation in the Republic, caused by the influence of the socio-cultural realities of our time. The peculiarity of the linguistic situation in the region is associated with the dominance of the Russian language in all social spheres and with the tendency, indicated in the recent years, towards the national-regional component activating. The main background of spoken words is the Russian vocabulary, commonly in use. The local speech is provided with a certain groups of words that are thematically outlined by the sphere 'man and environment', and the Kalmyk morphemes, words, expressions and whole phrases, whose frequency of use depends on some subjective parameters of a speaker, his emotional state, and a situation of communication. In the Russian language used by the older Kalmyks, lexical-semantic, phonetic, morphological and syntactic interference is vivid, since the dominance is given to their native language. The younger generation is represented with the Russian-language speakers, the carriers of the Kalmyk national character and communicative behavior. The national etiquette phrases, family terms and phraseology can be used occasionally to create the national atmosphere and express emotions. Speech, being an instrument of human knowledge, carries the important information about the epoch and people living in different times. The case introduced here will discuss the modern Republic of Kalmykia.

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**Keywords:** Russian spoken speech, regional peculiarities, the Kalmyks, interference, social parameters of an individual, linguistic situation.



## **1. Introduction**

The quality of the Russian spoken speech indicates the language forms involving into homo communicants' development. It can be a native language of a speaker, a dialect, vernaculars, jargon, slang, which are spread within and over the territory. In the national regions of Russia all above mentioned language forms are presented. In interaction they put a specific coloration to the native/local speech. The language situation in the Republic Kalmykia, where 89 nationalities are living, is determined by the factor that both languages – Russian and Kalmyk – are officially declared as the State languages that is caused a great number of the Kalmyks who have a high level of commands in Russian. This results in weakening the south Russian dialect, in the linguistic influence zone in which the Republic is located (Esenova, 2015).

## **2. Problem Statement**

The urgency of the problem is determined by the change in the linguistic situation in the region influenced by socio-cultural realities of our time. The study of an urban language in Russian linguistics began with the initiative of Academic Larin (1928), who was convinced in the importance of studying urban speech which significantly differs from both literal and oral speech, used by people living in rural places. Subsequently, the study over a spoken language developed in two directions: study on the linguistic image of a city and study on a spoken language, recorded mainly in cities. A great contribution to the study of oral speech was made by the linguists from Moscow, Saratov, Krasnoyarsk, Perm and by other scientific centers who are dealing with the spoken language records in its natural existence and use, with identification and description of its phonetic, lexical, morphological, syntactic characteristics, features of non-verbalism (Borisova, 1996). With the time, in Russia there have been opened two main centers where the research studies are conducted towards Russian colloquial speech, one center is in Moscow (under the leadership of Ye.A. Zenskaya) (Zenskaya, 1987; Zenskaya & Shiryaev, 1988; Zenskaya, Kitaygorodskaya, & Shiryaev, 1981) and the other is in Saratov (under the leadership of Sirotinina (1983, 1988). Currently, the main characteristics of the Russian spoken language are identified, determined by the main factors of its appearing (informality, ease, spontaneity, situational conditionality, emotionality, evaluative character, lack of strict logic). However, the study of lively conversational speech, which is rapidly changing under the influence of some social extra linguistic parameters, remains relevant (Kitaygorodskaya & Rozanov, 1996; Kitaygorodskaya & Rozanov, 2010).

## **3. Research Questions**

Russian colloquial speech of the region has been studied by the Kalmykia linguists since the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The results are presented in some articles, which reflect the author's view regarding the certain aspects of this problem. The approach was logical at the initial stage of studying the Russian spoken language in the context of Kalmyk-Russian bilingualism. New research impulse was received in 1985, when the famous linguist, professor of Saratov State University, Sirotinina (1983), headed a scientific group of linguists in Kalmyk State University. Under her scientific leadership, we got started the work on records aimed at analyzing the oral speech. The recorded materials today are of great scientific and historical value, since they contain the spoken language of the bygone era – the Soviet one. The collected

language material was considered in the national-territorial and cultural-speech aspects, taking into account the influence of some social parameters of informants (age, gender, profession, education, place of residence) on the oral informal speech.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

As known, the Russian colloquial speech throughout the whole territory of the Russian Federation is not the same due to the socio-cultural conditions of its existence, linguistic characteristics of a particular region. So, in some territories, the Russian language interacts with the dialects existing there; in others it interacts with the national languages and their dialects. The role of vernacular, jargon in developing the regional features of Russian spoken language is great. The profound social changes of the recent years, as noted by Sklyarevskaya (1991), accelerated the processes of linguistic evolution and shattered the stability of some linguistic structures, which led to transformations at all levels of the language. The purpose of the research is to study the regional peculiarities of Russian colloquial speech used by the residents of Kalmykia, which is formed under influence of modern linguistic reality.

#### **5. Research Methods**

The material for this study there were the records/transcripts of Russian colloquial speech. They were collected in the Republic in different periods of time. The representatives of all social strata, who speak literary language, male and female (teachers, employees, doctors, engineers, farmers, students, workers, housewives, etc.) acted as informants. The records were made in the natural setting of speakers (usually at home) without prior preparation. The subject of conversations was wide (professional conversations, different discourses – international, financial, social and political, children upbringing and education, culinary recipes, diseases, etc.). Further, the transcripts of records and linguistic (phonetic, lexico-semantic, morphological, syntactic, lingual-cultural) analysis of the material were carried out.

#### **6. Findings**

The analysis shows that the specifics of the Russian language used by the inhabitants of Kalmykia are mainly shaped by vocabulary, which is characterized by the certain diversity. Although it is dominated by neutral literary words, there are reduced colloquial (*bolshutshiy*, *boltat* – ‘tremendous, chatter’) and slang words (*brehat*, *baldezh*, *hawat* – ‘lie like a crazy one, buzz, chomp down on’) along with literal vocabulary (*precedent*, *expansion*, *pretentious*). While speaking Russian, the Kalmyks of the older and mid generations can use words and expressions from the Kalmyk language. This fact, as a rule, is explained by the desire to express an idea emotionally or accurately in a particular situation. In general, the choice of multi-level linguistic means in colloquial speech depends on such subjective characteristics of communicators as age, education, profession, occupation, social status. The Russian colloquial speech of the local population in general reflects the general Russian features (Esenova, 1989). The local Russian language is illustrated with the certain thematic classes of words/vocabulary. These tokens describe:

- enterprises, institutions: the hospital - Republican Clinical Hospital; a place – ‘livestock’, etc.;

- areas of the city: the first, second micro-district. In informal speech, imaginative nominations of spatial objects are used, indicating the language in its creativity that is used by the inhabitants of the region. For example: a 'Caucasian prisoner' (*Kavkazkay plenitsa*) is the seventh micro-district of Elista, where the immigrants from the Caucasus Republics live; drunk street - Elista district, where some summer cafes are located; Amurka - National Library named after A. Amur-Sanana; a field of miracles - wholesale base.

- housing: '*pyatietazhka*' - five-story residential building, etc., '*Khrushchevka*' - houses built when N.S. Khrushchev was the leader of the country (USSR); the other option is noted - '*trutshovka*' (*shanty town*), etc.;

- vehicles: *koshara* - Ikarus brand bus, etc. ;

- stops: '*karmashek*' (*small pocket*) – a stop on demand, '*plodik*' (*small fruit*) - fruit and vegetable station', etc.;

- newspapers: *Elisinka* - newspaper 'the Elista Panorama', etc.;

- shoes: *bashmaki* - shoes, *chuvyaki* - slippers, etc.;

- occupation: *sacman* - lambs' pasture (derivatives: *sakmantshik* (*noun*), *sakmanit* (*verb*)), etc. ;

- communications: *mobilka*, *mobilnik*, *trubka* - mobile phone, *Innet* - Internet, *messenger* - mobile applications, etc. The modern digital communication has led to the emergence of new symbols (gadget, iPhone, android, tablet, iPad, netbook, laptop, Macbook, ultrabook, text messages, etc.), which are gradually mastered in Russian, as evidenced by their involvement in word formation. For example, in the speech of the inhabitants in the region you can hear: at exam is not allowed *asmesit(ing)* (send sms/text messages); *asmeska* (sms/text message) has come from him. Moreover, in this communicative sphere, new words appear: *dozvon* - a call at expense of a subscriber; a figurative expression: *a Jewish call* - a call at expense of a subscriber.

In oral speech we encounter different categories of people. Frequent are relational names that call a person in terms of relationships they are in with others. This may be, for example, relationships such as:

- family-related relationship (aunt, grandmother, granny, uncle, daughter, son, granddaughter; '*еежа*' - 'grandmother', '*аава*' - 'grandfather', '*заша*' - 'aunt'; '*зашука*' - 'aunt' (from *заша* 'aunt' + suffix –shk); '*зашауа*' - 'aunt' (from *заша* 'aunt' + suffix –sh); '*авх*' - 'uncle'; '*авхашука*' - 'uncle' (from *авх* 'uncle' + suffix –shk); '*ах*' - 'nephew' (grandson on paternal family tree); '*зе*' - 'niece' (maternal granddaughter), and etc. In oral speech, the terms of family relations, as a rule, are used in their direct function and convey the attitude of a speaker to an addressee. In addition, the terms of family relations in colloquial speech can be used when referring to a stranger, not a family member (*dyadka*, *dyadenka*, *tetka*, *tetenka*, *babushka*, *vnuchok*, etc.; '*көүүн*' - 'boy, son', '*күүкн*' - 'girl, daughter'). An interesting element of the language game in the non-official speech of the Kalmyks in naming people is '*Zuleyka*' (from the Kalmyk verb *зүлх* - 'out of the mind' + Russian suffix -k; often used ironically in relation to a close friend or relative or to himself), '*блoxa*' (a metathesis from a Kalmyk name *болха*), '*татин/ежин борзук*' (from Kalmyk's '*борзук*' – 'pancake fried in butter'; ironic meaning as in Russian 'mother's son');

- emotional affection (friend, girlfriend, boyfriend, classmate, chum; '*уин*' - 'boyfriend, girlfriend', '*ур*' - 'boyfriend, comrade, girlfriend', etc.);

- love (lover, bridegroom, bride; '*күрген*' – 'bridegroom and etc.);

- in a team (colleague, employee, manager; '*ахлах*' - 'boss', '*хардах*' - 'manager', etc.).

In addition, such categories point to individuals within various backgrounds. For example, by:

- professions (teacher, doctor, cook, seamstressж 'багш' - 'teacher', 'емч' - 'doctor', 'мосхач' - 'builder', 'малч' - 'breeder, cattle breeder, shepherd', 'адуч' - 'herdsman', 'хөөч' - 'shepherd' and others.);

- age (boy, girl, grandfather, grandmother, woman, man; залу - 'man', гержн - 'woman', бер - 'young married woman', 'көкшэд' - 'old man', etc.). Unfortunately, in recent years, the words 'woman/lady' and 'man' have been commonly used as appeals (even at the university, the following addressing a teacher is noted: 'Lady, check the work, please');

- nationality: Kalmyk (female and male), Russian (female and male), 'ууһр' - 'Russian', 'хаск' - 'Kazakh', 'маңһд' - 'Tatar', 'хар һуһр' - 'Jewish, taboo', 'хачик' - 'a person from the Caucasus';

- tribal affiliation: 'морһуд' - 'Torgout', 'дөрвөд' - 'Derbet', 'бузав' - 'Buzav, a name for Don Kalmyks', 'балдр' - 'metis';

- appearance: bearded, blond; 'maxa molhama' - 'hairless or bold', 'күдр-бадр' - 'strong', 'харлушка' - 'nigella' from 'хар(л)' - 'black' + suffix -ushk;

- wealth: rich, socialite, beggar, poor man, 'түүрү бээдэг' - 'living with financial difficulties', 'уғата' - 'poor', 'байн' - 'rich';

- locality: collective farmer - 'who used to live in Kalmykia villages', that was replaced with the word 'гасконцы' (*Gascons*), and testifies about the shifting nature of lexis; balcony farmers - 'city citizens who registered its farming'; in-migrants/settlers - participants within the program "Relocation out of old and dilapidated housing";

- behaviour: debaucher, hooligan, 'эсп' - 'hooligan', 'азд' - 'brawler, trouble maker';

- habits and activities: drunkard, alky, 'эркнч' - 'drinker', 'сокту' - 'sob', 'хулхач' - 'theft', 'худлч' - 'liar', 'залхуч' - 'lazy';

- other qualities and features: *shabay* - 'a person without permanent residence and employment', *boxers* - 'people who sell currency in streets'.

As seen, when describing a person the means of the native language (word-formation, lexical and idiomatic expressions) are actively used. In the Kalmyk Russian language, the national words are used as expressive means. Probably, the Kalmyk words are rated by speakers as more emotional.

In spontaneous speech, the speaker seeks to indicate the attitude towards a communication partner. For this purpose, different variants of a proper name are used in addressing/calling by a name (*Tanyusha, Tanya, Tanka, Tan, Tancha, Tatiana, Tatiana Okonovna, Okonovna, Mandzhieva*), nicknames (*Kalancha, Korotishka, Zanuda*, etc.), which are based on some distinctive characteristic of a person's appearance or character.

In colloquial speech, the attitude towards a subject of communication, as a rule, is colored by a specific expression or evaluation. There is a tendency not to call but describe the subject of communication: e.g. '**you, in red** (wearing in red), take it after me; is there anything from **pressure** (blood pressure)'. There is a derogatory-scornful attitude which is transmitted through word-building means (e.g. *endless pieces of paper* (documents) are asked for; *doins* (business/dealings) have harassed me), phraseological units (e.g. *I am running around my own axis; they are working under whiplash*). In addition, on the one hand, subject hyperbolizing is typical. With this aim 'clericals' are often used (e.g. *study the document carefully and read*

and acknowledge by singing), on the other hand, the use of diminutives is noted, usually in female speech (e.g. *you need to buy a small sausage, and drink some tea*).

In oral speech of Kalmykia residents, the influence of vernacular can be traced: one can find a non-verbal form of a verb, e.g. 'polozhit' (Rus) – 'lozhit' (Kalm). In colloquial speech, one can hear euphemisms (in a position, in years, in age, elderly, etc.), taboo words and expressions (onco, problem with a head, etc.). Some words, known to the residents, can be used to veil up a sense, e.g. [If you behave badly, you will go to **Priutnoe**] (a mental hospital is located there). [You really do not want him to be in **Verkhniy Yashkul**] (a boarding school is located there). In oral speech, taboo words and expressions from the Kalmyk language are possible to use: e.g. [She has '**мер му зем**' (cancer disease), you hear '**авна**' takes] (take a bribe).

In Russian colloquial speech of older generation, the results of lexical-semantic interference are noted. There are deviations from the norms of word use, as a result of transferring the values of the Kalmyk language tokens to a non-native language: e.g. **varit soup** (Kalm) – instead of **gotovit soup** (Rus); **svarit tea** (Kalm) – instead of **zavarit tea** (Rus) and etc. Some interference errors there have been noted in using the case forms of nominative parts of speech that is caused by differences in the declension system of nominative parts of speech in the Russian and Kalmyk languages. Next interference error is characterized by mistakes in use of prepositions, due to their absence in the Kalmyk language; either by mistakes in coordination of nominative parts of speech in gender, number, case; by mistakes in word order, e.g. *Sibirit leader I was*.

Multiple-level Kalmyk national elements (morphemes, lexemes, phrases, sentences) can be included into the Russian spoken/colloquial language. Karlinsky (1990), who considers such foreign-language inclusions into the Russian language, distinguishes between inventory and phrase intercalations. Inventory intercalation in the oral informal speech of older generation of Kalmykia is represented by some lexical elements that do not have equivalents in the Russian language, e.g. [Let's go and congratulate '**zaha**'] (**gaga** - paternal aunt); [Sometimes I want so much to eat '**dotur**'] (**dotur** is a national dish made from animal guts). Inventory intercalation can be associated with expressing some attitude towards something: '**ууѳ**', let's get out of here, ('**ууѳ**' - Kalmyk interjections). Phrase intercalation is represented by etiquette elements: [**Sən bəətn** (Goodbye), **Mendyt-mendyt, kyndə үүрмүд**] (Hello, dear friends).

Of particular interest is the inclusion of the Kalmyk set expressions into the Russian language of Kalmyks, which are also used with the purpose to emphasize. Examples: [**Мини соседк күн биш, даже мөндлхи**] - My neighbor is uncultured, never says hello (**Kun Bish** - 'not a person'); [**Буйн болтха, дверь закрой**] - Please, close the door (**Buin Boltha** - please).

Intercalation is also represented by complete sentences within the rules of a non-native language, e.g. [**Телефонар өдрн дуусн болтат не устала?**] – Are you not tired with talking over the phone for a whole day? [**По телефону целый день болтат не устала?**] (**телефонар** – 'over phone', **өдрн дуусн** 'whole day').

In non-official oral speech of Kalmyks, hybrid words composed of Kalmyk and Russian morphemes are used. In the speech of older generation, these are words with a Russian root morpheme in combination with Kalmyk affixes: **дуумидлэд суунав** – 'сужу думаю' (from Russ. *думать* – to think, Kalm. affix of

*gerund* -эд; магазинд бэх – ‘в магазине будет’; from Rus. магазин, Kalm. case affix -д; жиизндэн үзэд  
угов – ‘в жизни не видела’; from Rus. жизнь, Kalm affixes -д и -эн and etc).

In speech of the Kalmyk youth, the opposite is observed. A Russian affix is added to the Kalmyk root morpheme: ‘авка’ - ‘grandfather’ from Kalm. ‘Аав’, Rus. suffix -k- and ending -а. Such occasionalisms are caused by the language of thinking, if to speak about the older generation it is Kalmyk, but for the younger one it is Russian. Some hybrids are momentary, and some, because of their unusualness, are reproducible as elements of a language game young people speaking. In Russian, the inhabitants of the Republic have few semantic coinages: [white road, good luck!] (‘цахан хаалт’ - ‘white road’) (Dzhushkhinova, 2013). So, the language, being an instrument of knowledge exchange between people, carries important information about the epoch and communicants, in this case about the modern Republic of Kalmykia.

## 7. Conclusion

Russian colloquial speech of the residents living in Kalmykia in general reflects the socio-cultural characteristics of the region. It concludes in the predominance of the Russian language in all areas of human activities. Interference lexical-semantic, phonetic and grammatical features caused by the influence of the native language are typical to the Russian language of the Kalmyks of older generation. The national component in the view of word-formation, lexical-semantic features, caused by the influence of the Kalmyk language, is represented in the speech of the Kalmyks of mid generation. In the Russian language of the Kalmyk youth, the interfering influence of the native language is not detected, some Kalmyk lexical, phraseological units are used by them within a situation with the aim to express and create the national atmosphere.

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