

SOCIOLINGUISTIC FEATURES OF THE LANGUAGE OF ETHNIC UZBEKS LIVING IN TÜRKIYE (THE CASE OF ADANA PROVINCE)

Aziza Abdusamatova

Doctoral student, Tashkent State University of Uzbek

Language and Literature named after Alisher Navoi

abdusamatovaaziza51296@gmail.com

Abstract:

This article analyzes, on the basis of field research, the assimilative influence of the local Turkish language on the language of ethnic Uzbeks living in Adana Province of the Republic of Türkiye. In the course of the study, the oral speech of respondents belonging to different age groups was recorded and examined from phonetic, lexical and sociolinguistic perspectives. The results show that while representatives of the first generation have largely preserved the dialectal features of Uzbek, in the third and subsequent generations the dominance of Turkish has increased and the process of language shift has accelerated. On the basis of “field materials”, the article also sheds light on the history of the Uzbeks’ migration to the Adana region, their efforts to preserve their language and the current language situation.

Keywords: ethnic Uzbeks, diaspora, language assimilation, language shift, sociolinguistics, dialectology, Turkish language, Adana, field research.

Introduction

As a result of the intensification of migration processes in the 20th–21st centuries, the study of the language of diasporas formed in various regions of the world has become one of the important areas of linguistics. In particular, the changes taking place in the language of ethnic groups living far from their historical homeland, the assimilation processes forming as a result of long-term contact with the local language, and intergenerational language shift are among the pressing issues of today’s sociolinguistics. Such studies are of great importance not only for the study of language development, but also for preserving ethnic identity, ensuring the continuity of cultural heritage and scientifically illuminating the life of the diaspora [1].

The ethnic Uzbeks living in Türkiye are one such historical diaspora group. The history of their migration to Türkiye includes several stages. While some families were forced to leave Turkestan as

a result of the political and military instability of the early 20th century, another large group was forced to leave the homeland in the early 1950s because of the political pressure of the Soviet regime. This migration process, which began as a result of various historical factors, took place mainly through Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the Turkestanian émigrés were later settled by the Turkish government in various regions of the country. A significant part of them began to live in the Yavuzlar neighborhood of Adana Province [2].

The historian and writer Chagatay Kochar examines the Turkestanis who came from Turkestan and settled in the Çukurova region of Türkiye by dividing them into three groups:

- a) those who came to Çukurova during and after the First World War;
- b) those who came to Çukurova after the Second World War;
- c) those who came to Çukurova after 1950 (Koçar, 1990. XI Türk Tarih Kongresi).

The Turkestanis who came during the First World War settled mainly in Adana Province, as well as in Mersin, Ceyhan, Osmaniye and Tarsus (Koçar, 1990. XI Türk Tarih Kongresi). Turkestanian young people and students who had gone to Mecca and Medina to study before the outbreak of the First World War and who, when the war began, voluntarily fought in the ranks of the Ottomans in the battles of Aqaba, Suez and Hejaz, came and settled in Çukurova after the war. During the study, conversations were also held with descendants of those who came and settled in Adana in this period. Some of them married local residents and no longer speak Uzbek [3].

Those who came to Çukurova during and after the Second World War consisted of young soldiers brought from Germany. Turkestanian soldiers who had fought in the war as part of the Soviet army were taken prisoner by the Germans. Mustafa Chokay and Vali Qayyumkhan, who were in the prisoner-of-war camps, rescued the prisoners. After Germany lost the war, a number of Turkestanian soldiers applied to the Turkish Embassy and were brought to Çukurova. In Çukurova they were settled in Adana, Mersin and Ceyhan, and the state provided them with houses.

The majority of the Turkestanis settled in Çukurova were those who came after 1950. Most of them came from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. In particular, in 1952, 72 families came from Afghanistan as migrants and settled in Adana.

As S. Tolkun notes, and as emphasized by interviewees during the study, the émigrés who came to Türkiye initially lived in camps and temporary housing allocated by the state; later they were given plots of land and the opportunity for permanent residence was created. Along with adapting to the new social environment, they paid special attention to preserving their national values, customs and mother tongue. For this purpose, in 1950 the “Society for Assistance to Turkestanian Emigrants” (Türkistanlı Mücahitler Yardımlaşma Derneği) was established. A year later, the “Turkestanis’ Aid Society” (Türkistanlılar Yardımlaşma Derneği) was founded by Rasih Ozgan, Bedri Hojand, Beyhan Alper, Murat Jengiz and Jevdat Akchali. This society served not only as a social center uniting the émigrés, but also as an important institution for preserving the national language and culture. The society regularly organized national holidays, cultural meetings, commemorative events and activities aimed at the upbringing of young people. According to Chagatay Kochar, a well-known writer and poet of Türkiye and of the Adana Turkestanis, the Turkestanis in Adana tried not only to preserve their customs and national holidays but also to pass on the idea of Turkestan’s independence from generation to generation. After the Turkestan republics gained independence in 1991, the diaspora’s ties with the historical homeland were further revitalized [4]. In particular, meetings between relatives who previously had no opportunity to see each other, cultural ties and mutual visits intensified.

This article analyzes the results of field research conducted among ethnic Uzbeks living in the Yavuzlar neighborhood of Adana Province. During the study, interviews were conducted with respondents of different age groups, their oral speech was recorded, and the phonetic, lexical and sociolinguistic features of their language were studied comparatively [5].

The scientific novelty of the study lies in the fact that it analyzes local-language assimilation in the language of ethnic Uzbeks in Türkiye on the basis of “authentic field materials” collected by the author. Observations show that respondents over 50–70 years of age still actively use Uzbek in mutual communication, and historical dialect layers are preserved in their speech. In some cases, the alternating use of elements of Uzbek and Turkish within a single sentence, that is, the phenomenon of code-switching, is observed. This shows that it can be assessed as one of the natural linguistic processes arising from language contact and creates the need to study it in depth from the perspectives of sociolinguistics and dialectology [6].

Methods

This study was devoted to examining the speech of ethnic Uzbeks living in Adana Province of the Republic of Türkiye directly on the basis of “field research”. During the research, interviews with respondents were conducted in the form of natural conversation; their oral speech was recorded and subsequently analyzed from phonetic, lexical and sociolinguistic perspectives. Respondents were selected from different age groups. Particular attention was paid to determining the degree of preservation of Uzbek dialects in the language of respondents aged 50–70 and over.

Field observations were conducted in the Yavuzlar neighborhood of Adana Province. This area is one of the places in Türkiye most densely inhabited by ethnic Uzbeks, and its formation is linked to the émigrés who came from Turkestan in the middle of the 20th century. Studies show that older-generation residents of the neighborhood still use Uzbek, albeit to a small extent, in mutual communication. According to S. Tolkun, the majority of Uzbeks in Türkiye are natives of the Fergana Valley. They came mainly from Andijan, Namangan, Margilan, Kokand, Uzgen, Osh, Shahrikhan, Khujand and Jalal-Abad, as well as from areas such as Tashkent, Samarkand and Bukhara. A small number of émigrés also came from the areas around Karshi, Termez, Turkestan and Dushanbe. As the author notes, as a result of living cut off from the historical homeland for many years, marriages within the diaspora and representatives of different regions living in one place, a distinctive émigré Uzbek language has formed among the Uzbeks of Türkiye. Consequently, some dialect features have become generalized; for example, instead of the forms *kelutti* in the Namangan dialect and *kevotti* in the Tashkent dialect, the variant *kelyapti* (‘is coming’) has come into wide use.

Results

The observations we conducted in Adana Province also confirm these views. Although the respondents come from the Namangan, Tashkent, Andijan, Osh, Shahrikhan, Kokand, Margilan and Bukhara regions, they use the literary form *kelyapti*. However, this should not lead to the conclusion that they *no longer use* dialect words, because on careful observation one can encounter respondents in whose speech dialect elements occur. For example, it becomes clear that the speech of Ruqiyakhon aya, a 70-year-old woman living in the Yavuzlar neighborhood (her father was originally from Andijan and her mother from Margilan; she herself was born in Türkiye and grew up in an Uzbek-speaking family environment), has preserved elements of the Andijan dialect, which proves our point: *apaq üjyandijizmi* (‘dear, have you woken up?’), *ettäminän türgändä nanüšta kop jäxšikändä adamgä* (‘in the morning when one gets up, breakfast is very good for a person’), *šättän minnim, šättän kettim* (‘I got on here, I got off here’), *šuna:a dijishti* (‘that is what they said’), *to:zza ojnäppän* (‘I played a lot’), *bilälmädim, jürägim güpillägäni türdi* (‘I could not tell, my heart stopped pounding’), *Xudojim jänä qajtip näsip qisin sizzi šätkä* (‘may God grant you to come back here again’), *sänä rähmät didim* (‘I said thank you to you’), *qizim män šättä qalejin* (‘my daughter, let me stay here’). This shows that a historical-grammatical feature found in Fergana dialects is well preserved in the respondents’ speech [7].

In the speech of the Uzbeks in Adana, sounds have in many cases approached the pronunciation of Türkiye Turkish. For this reason, in some cases their pronunciation may be assessed as close to the Khorezm dialect, which belongs to the Oghuz dialect group. This is especially noticeable in the pronunciation of vowels.

Because the Uzbeks in Adana have used Uzbek only as a means of family communication, changes have occurred in their vocabulary. The Turkish-language education system and the fact that social life takes place entirely in Turkish have also had a direct impact on this. For example, the synonyms of some words have been forgotten and only one form remains in use. While the word *bala* ('child') is actively used, units such as *go'dak* and *chaqaloq* ('baby, infant') are not used at all. A limited vocabulary is also observed in color names and in the names of animals and plants. It even becomes evident that only the Turkish forms of some fruit and plant names are used [8]. For example, while *kartishka* ('potato'), *alma* ('apple'), *pamildori* ('tomato') and *karam* ('cabbage') are still said in Uzbek, fruit and plant names such as *fasulye* ('beans'), *çilek* ('strawberry'), *muz* ('banana'), *portakal* ('orange') and *mandalina* ('mandarin') are now called only by their Turkish names.

Another noteworthy aspect is that some Persian words are used even instead of certain Turkish and Uzbek words, for example, *kinorap* ('toilet'), *bichim* ('my child'), *bagiz* ('suitcase'), *bajimjan* ('eggplant') and *aks* ('photograph'). The reason for this may be that those settled in Türkiye had first moved from Uzbekistan to Afghanistan before coming here, and were influenced by the language environment there.

Our observations also confirm Kochar's views to a certain extent. During the field research conducted in Adana Province, it was observed that older respondents (aged 50–70 and over) still call themselves "Turkestanis", know the memories related to the history of Turkestan well, and strive to pass this memory on to their children within the family [9]. Representatives of the first generation, that is, those who migrated first, actively used Uzbek in family and community communication and strove to raise their children in their mother tongue, because parents regarded the mother tongue as an integral part of national identity and considered teaching it to their children an important task. As a result, although representatives of the second generation born in Türkiye grew up in a bilingual environment, they were able to communicate freely in Uzbek. However, in subsequent generations, owing to the dominance of Turkish in all spheres of social life, education being conducted entirely in Turkish, and the needs of everyday communication, the functional scope of Uzbek has narrowed significantly, and most representatives of the third and fourth generations use only Turkish in everyday life [10]. Although there are people among them who understand Uzbek, the number of fluent speakers is considerably low. Some young people, although they understand certain Uzbek words and sentences, have difficulty continuing a conversation. This indicates that language assimilation is proceeding naturally and consistently.

One noteworthy aspect is that, although the level of use of Uzbek among the younger generation is low, the use of the respectful form "siz" (formal "you") in addressing parents and grandparents is preserved. This shows that the culture of family communication and the principles of respect of Uzbek society still continue. In contrast, in Turkish culture the use of the "sen" (informal "you") form in addressing parents is widespread, which is a feature of the norm of address in this society [11].

Discussion

Language assimilation is one of the complex sociolinguistic processes arising as a result of long-term language contact. In this process, an ethnic group gradually adopts the phonetic, lexical and grammatical features of the dominant language, and as a result the functional scope of the mother tongue narrows.

The situations observed in the language of ethnic Uzbeks in Türkiye are consistent precisely with

these theoretical views. A number of social and linguistic factors play an important role in the emergence of language assimilation. In particular, education being conducted entirely in Turkish, the priority of Turkish in state institutions and social life, the increase in mixed marriages, and the fact that mass media and digital platforms operate mainly in Turkish have reduced the circle of people communicating in Uzbek [12]. As a result, for the younger generation Turkish is becoming the main language not only of official communication but also of family and personal life [13].

These “field studies” serve as an important scientific source for studying the current state of the language of ethnic Uzbeks living in Türkiye. The results obtained show that, although the role of language in preserving ethnic identity is invaluable, the influence of the local language is increasing as a result of long-lasting migration, the new social environment and generational change. In particular, the sharp decline in the active use of Uzbek among the younger generation calls for a more in-depth study of issues related to the preservation of this diaspora language in the future [14].

One of the important results of the study is that there is almost no Russian influence in the speech of the older generation of Uzbeks in Adana. This may be assessed as a situation that differs from current Uzbek speech in Uzbekistan. One of the main reasons for this is that the groups that first migrated to Türkiye lived outside the territory of Uzbekistan for a long time, first in Afghanistan and Pakistan and later in Türkiye. At the same time, the influence of Turkish is significant, and it is manifested in units related to social life and everyday communication in Türkiye.

The results of the study also show the historical significance of the Yavuzlar neighborhood for language maintenance. According to S. Tolkun, the main residential areas of the Turkestanis in Adana were neighborhoods such as Yavuzlar and Sinanpaşa; later, as a result of the increase in multi-storey buildings, they began to spread to other parts of the city [15]. Assessing this situation from a linguistic point of view, it can be concluded that living densely in one area and communicating regularly with one another created a natural communicative environment that served to preserve the mother tongue.

Conclusion

This study was devoted to examining the language situation of ethnic Uzbeks living in Türkiye, in particular the influence of the local Turkish language on Uzbek and its dialect features, using the example of Adana Province. During the study, the observations on the language of Uzbeks in Türkiye previously recorded by S. Tolkun were compared with the direct “field research” conducted in Adana Province. As a result of the “field research”, it was found that the speech of the Adana Uzbeks is not homogeneous and that there are significant differences between generations. In the speech of older-generation respondents aged over 50, 60 and 70, the phonetic, lexical and grammatical features of Uzbek are relatively stably preserved. It can be emphasized that the processes of language maintenance and language assimilation are proceeding in parallel in the language of ethnic Uzbeks in Adana. While the continued use of Uzbek by the older generation in family and community communication shows the mechanisms of language maintenance, the complete dominance of Turkish among the younger generation represents the next stage of the language shift process. The speech of the Adana Uzbeks can be regarded as a distinctive language-contact area in which the historical dialect layers of Uzbek, the influence of the local Turkish language and intergenerational language shift are manifested together. This shows that the language of ethnic Uzbeks in Türkiye has developed under conditions different from those of modern Uzbek in Uzbekistan. Therefore, the Adana materials are an important source not only for studying the degree of preservation of Uzbek dialects in another geographical environment, but also for examining the phonetic, lexical and grammatical changes arising from long-term language contact. In conclusion, the assimilation process in the language of ethnic Uzbeks in Adana is not yet manifested as complete language shift, but as a process proceeding to varying degrees across generations, communicative domains and language units. While the historical and dialect-specific features of Uzbek are relatively better preserved in the speech of the older generation, the communicative status of Turkish is

growing stronger in subsequent generations. Therefore, studying the speech of the Adana Uzbeks at later stages on the basis of broader phonetic, morphological and lexical materials will make it possible to reveal more deeply the patterns of preservation and assimilation of the language of ethnic Uzbeks in Türkiye.

References

- [1] J. A. Fishman, Ed., *Can Threatened Languages Be Saved? Reversing Language Shift, Revisited: A 21st Century Perspective*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2001. [Online]. Available: <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED449672>
- [2] Ch. Kochar, *Çukurova’da Yaşayan Türkistan Kökenliler: Göç, Uyum ve Dil Meseleleri*. Adana: Kent Kültürü Akademisi, 2010.
- [3] Ch. Kochar, *History and Culture of the Uzbek Diaspora in Türkiye*. Adana: Çukurova Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2002.
- [4] J. W. Berry, ‘Immigration, Acculturation, and Adaptation’, *Applied Psychology*, vol. 46, no. 1, pp. 5–34, 1997, doi: 10.1111/j.1464-0597.1997.tb01087.x.
- [5] UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages, ‘Language Vitality and Endangerment’, UNESCO, Paris, 2003.
- [6] U. Weinreich, *Languages in Contact: Findings and Problems*. New York: Linguistic Circle of New York, 1953.
- [7] T. Skutnabb-Kangas, *Linguistic Genocide in Education—or Worldwide Diversity and Human Rights?* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2000.
- [8] W. Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- [9] A. Pavlenko and A. Blackledge, Eds, *Negotiation of Identities in Multilingual Contexts*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2004.
- [10] J. A. Fishman, *Reversing Language Shift: Theoretical and Empirical Foundations of Assistance to Threatened Languages*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1991.
- [11] ‘Statute and Archival Documents of the Turkestani Emigrants’ Mutual Aid Society (1950–1952)’. 1950.
- [12] Ch. Kochar, ‘The Formation of the Uzbek Diaspora in the Adana and Mersin Region’, in *XI. Türk Tarih Kongresi Bildirileri*, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1990.
- [13] H. Giles, R. Y. Bourhis, and D. M. Taylor, ‘Towards a Theory of Language in Ethnic Group Relations’, in *Language, Ethnicity and Intergroup Relations*, H. Giles, Ed., London: Academic Press, 1977, pp. 307–348.
- [14] S. Tolkun, *Türkiye Özbeklerinin Dil Özellikleri ve Ağzı Yapısı*. Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları, 2010.
- [15] G. Extra and K. Yağmur, Eds, *Urban Multilingualism in Europe: Immigrant Minority Languages at Home and School*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2004.