

KAZAKH YOUTH DISCOURSE IN THE SITUATION OF MULTILINGUALISM IN MODERN SOCIETY

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Abstract

The article deals with the issues of youth discourse in multilingual society. Youth discourse is an indicator of current cultural and linguistic degree of contemporary environment, and it is significant in predicting the nearest future development of the whole national language. Communication of young people is unique and not always comprehensive for the representatives of other age groups as youth speech reflects common interests, and expresses the consciousness of unity and alienation from other social institutions. The paper gives an example of interesting phenomenon of multilingualism in Kazakhstan, where youth speech is particular with mixture of three languages – Kazakh, Russian and English. In the paper we make discourse analysis of youth speech from the Internet site which demonstrates real-life language code-switching cases. Language history has proved that newly invented youth expressions and slang can be easily involved into the standard national language.

Key words: youth discourse, discourse analysis, interference, multilingualism, code-switching, Internet discourse

INTRODUCTION

Youth discourse is often treated as a certain identity, formed by social processes. These social processes maintaining identity are determined by the social environment [Berger 1995]. Ideas associated with the study of social and psychological factors that contribute to the structuring of discourse are of high importance: as a party of social interaction, young people are involved in the production of collectively developed communication.

It is relevant to interpret the object of study - young people as a social and cultural group - through a set of common cultural qualities and functions. It is also important to consider subcultural aspects and approaches that define young people as owners of the definite psychophysical properties (Kovalev, 1999).

Rapid speed of development and renewal is a specific feature of an average youngster's life. Informal style of communication is caused by such reasons as seeking more favorable psychological conditions for interaction, expectation of sympathy, unity and self-affirmation. It is impossible to communicate with youngsters without understanding their language. The language is constantly changing and showing vividly the change of life.

There is a kind of pressure on the formation of Kazakh youth discourse from other languages (English, Russian). Kazakh youth discourse is still under significant influence of the Russian language, while English is the dominant trend in languages of Kazakh-speaking and Russian-speaking youth. The youth language, however, is not "invented" by individuals, but it appears in the process of communication, going through all the social and psychological effects of the global cultural environment.

Social factors affecting the language component of youth discourse are closely connected with the psychological aspect of the mass Internet and media discourses. A modern youth representative is often eager to express himself linguistically by the use of special symbolic means. Tsibizov who studies German youth discourse emphasizes the trend of fading of emotional communication, and increasing of introvert linguistic consciousness of young people (Tsibizov). Media and Internet contribute to the fact that the actual communication becomes passive, and the young people get

restricted in expressing their thoughts and emotions. Not only psychological and social factors reflect formation of youth discourse, but geographical and language situation of the region can play a crucial part in the language of youngsters.

1. YOUTH DISCOURSE IN KAZAKHSTAN

In multicultural language situation youth verbal communication perceives special characteristics, combining several languages and inventing new modifications of words and collocations. Multilingualism in Kazakhstan is a historically fixed and habitual situation. Majority of young generation is bilingual since the early childhood due to the usage of Russian and active increasing of status of Kazakh since the 1990-s. Approximately 20% of the population is the representatives of other ethnic groups (except Kazakh and Russian) and they mostly know their native languages, so we can assume that this part of population is definitely multilingual. The policy of trilingualism supported by the Government has put forward obligation for new generation to learn all the three languages – Kazakh, Russian and English – on the same level. This requirement also causes steady multilingualism among youngsters.

The Kazakh language is influenced much by Russian due to epoch of being a part of the USSR. Young generation had to pass many difficulties in shifting to Kazakh as a state language. It was hard for urban Kazakh youth whose parents had been victims of mass russification, and did not use much their mother tongue (Kappassova, 2013). Especially, it was hard for non-Kazakh population who got used to the fact that they did not need Kazakh beyond colloquial basics. Involving Kazakh into all spheres of life was intensified by the Government.

2. INTERNET AND YOUTH DISCOURSE

2.1 *Internet as a vivid indicator of modern youth discourse*

The study of youth language used in e-communication has attracted the attention of scholars, who have had serious resonance about the spoken or written speech and formality or informality of speech registers. The informalization of language has changed many traditional concepts, such as the association of formality with written language and of informality with the spoken word (Montero et al, 2005). Fairclough emphasized that in contemporary discourse practices, there appear more and more “mixtures of formal and informal styles, technical and non-technical vocabularies, markers of authority and familiarity, more typically written and more typically spoken syntactic forms” (Fairclough 1995: 79). E-communication discourse is considered to be a kind of informal hybrid of spoken and written speech and is nowadays performs as a bridge between written and spoken skills (Montero-Fleta, Frances Watts, García-Carbonell, 1995). So, if youth discourse is peculiar with its emotiveness, expressiveness and “inventiveness” of the new forms, Internet youth discourse adds such additional characteristics as spoken-written hybrid speech, expression of non-verbal communication and state of mood by written speech (emoicons, pictures, status of profiles in social nets, online post-cards, etc). Internet communication is very productive as a resource for linguistic investigation, less difficult than spoken discourse analysis as communication is fixed and static. On the contrary, spoken discourse needs some supplementary devices and time to fix it in analysis.

2.2 *YouTube language*

YouTube is a video hosting service which provides users with storage, shipping and displaying video. Users have the opportunities to add, browse, comment and share with various videos including amateur movies shot by themselves. Due to the simplicity and ease of use it has become extremely popular. I chose YouTube as a material for analyzing youth discourse in the frame of Internet communication. I focus on the language in comments as they vividly represent live speech, on one hand, it is spontaneous like spoken speech, on the other hand, it is fixed and available for analysis like written discourse. Moreover, YouTube materials can be bright samples of youth speech as they make

it easier to select topics relevant for youngsters and decide about the exact age of the users while in other forums the topics cannot be the criterion which shows the age of the participants.

Such sociolinguistic phenomena as interference and code-switching can be seen obviously in these spontaneous comments because in real written speech or official forums users would hardly break the rules, they would probably select the appropriate words, avoid interjections, interference and consult dictionaries.

2.3 Interference in Kazakh youth discourse

Interference and code-switching are main characteristics of any multilingual society. Multilingualism and bilingualism are the objects of high interest among scholars in the world (Auer, 1998; Milroy and Muysken, 1995; Myers-Scotton, 1993). Code switching shows the level of bilingualism. Code-switching means the ability of a speaker to switch from one language to another and vice versa without breaking the rules of the languages (Akynova, Zharkynbekova, 2014).

However, as we mentioned above, interference happens not only on the between Kazakh and Russian as the leading language of bilingual youth. English which has become a symbol of prestige has also been inserted into youth speech in the form of slang, “self-invented” borrowed expressions. Usage of English borrowings seems to add newness and fashion to the image of a youngster, and certainly satisfy his/her ambitions. The following forms of addressing are already common in everyday youth discourse: baby, crazy, shopping, clubbing, man, respect, face, party, etc. The interference of adding suffixes borrowed from English to Kazakh roots is also a popular trend.

Eg,

Suffix “- tion”. Махаббат (love)+tion= махаббатизэйшн. The newly “invented” word “махаббатизэйшн” in youth language means love with some humorous effect and is used to add some foreign sounding to the word.

- ман. Мәжіліс (a party of Parliament)+man=мәжілісмен. The word “мәжілісмен” means “a member of the Mazhilis party”.

3. DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF KAZAKH YOUTH SPEECH ON YOUTUBE CHANNEL

3.1 Statement of the problem and hypothesis

The research described below is aimed to illustrate the existence of hybrid Kazakh youth discourse which specific due to its historically fixed multiculturalism and multilingualism. In sociolinguistics it is assumed that languages on the same territory and the same society cannot avoid influence to each other. Pak N. proves that Korean language in Kazakhstan is not the same as Korean Language in the Southern or Northern Korea (Pak). The similar situation happens to all the languages that are spoken by about 120 non-Kazakh ethnic groups in Kazakhstan (Journal “Assambleya narodov Kazakhstana”). This research is focused on Kazakh-speaking youth who are mostly bilingual and sometimes multilingual. The situation of multilingualism increases the “inventiveness” of their discourse as a result of language interference and code-switching. Based on the example of Internet resources I have set up the task to demonstrate the tendency of hybrid youth discourse and new tendencies in language formation in multilingual situation. The analysis of youth discourse depicted in the paper is one of the initial stages of the investigation of youth discourse in a multilingual situation.

3.2 Methodology

Discourse analysis has been defined as the use of language units beyond the sentence (Jones, 2012) and of their relationship to the communication contexts in which they are used, becoming the study of the linguistic relations and structure in discourse. Discourse analysis research is valuable not only because it can help in the description of language paradigms. It also provides useful information to identify the tendency of new communication patterns and language change. Discourse analysis of YouTube comments is used in the current research to illustrate the tendency of modern youth language.

3.3 Data collection

At the initial stage of the research there were selected fifteen YouTube videos with the brightest vivid examples of language mixture. The selection was implemented according to the topics of the video. As the object of the study is youth discourse, I paid the attention to the topics which mostly interest people of 14-25 years old. They are youth comedy shows, new young singers' and bands' videos, new youth movie trailers, interviews with young celebrities popular among youngsters. In the article I also propose several samples from Kazakh youth chat rooms where interesting code-switching cases can be observed.

3.4 The process of the research

The following example demonstrates youth discourse on the materials from YouTube channel. We selected at random several videos presented in Kazakh. It was supposed to be the discussions and comments in Kazakh, but the actual way of expressing thoughts is really interesting due to the fact of code-switching, exactly insertions from Russian. This is illustrated in Figure 1.

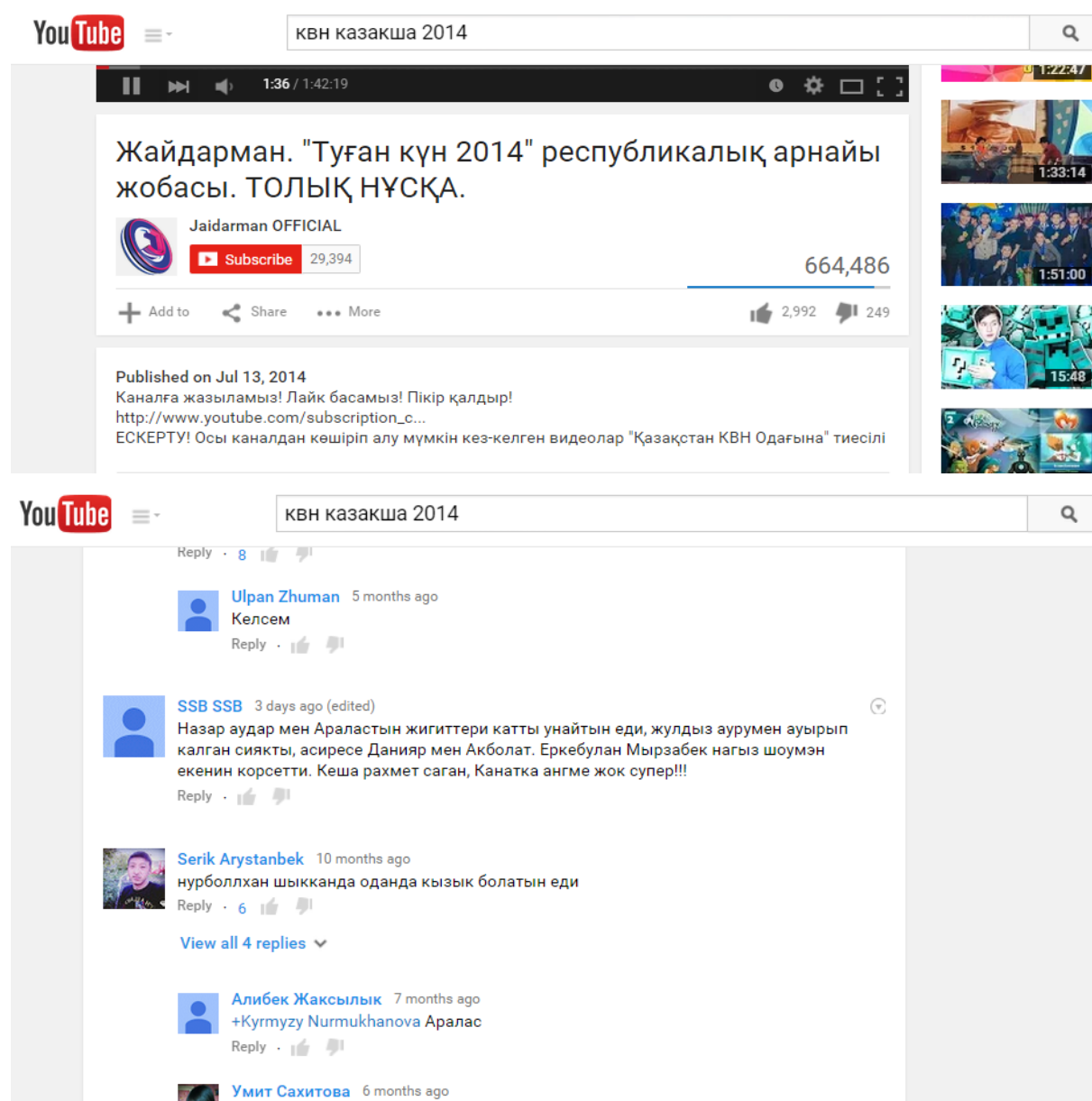


Figure 1. YouTube channel (video of youth comedy show)

The extract presents mixture of Kazakh and Russian. Though most of the young audience of the comedy show intend to type in Kazakh, Russian or even English expressions are usually inserted. The Russian and English insertions are given in bold type. The first fragment worth paying attention is the following:

“Каналға жазыламыз. Лайк басамыз”.

English translation: “Subscribe to the channel. Click Like”.

The word «канал» is a Russian word which has its Kazakh translation “арна”. The Russian word is inserted here because of its wide usage in everyday speech.

“Лайк” is a slang borrowed from English “Like” and transcribed into Cyrillic. Though its Kazakh version is “Ұнаты”, it is more appropriate to use “Like” as a habitual term in Internet community. The term certainly shows the identity of youth in virtual world along with such specific terms as “trolling”, “spam”, “googling”, etc.

The next extract also illustrates Russian and English insertions:

*“Еркубұлан Мырзабек нағыз **шоумэн** екенін көрсетті. Кеша, рахмет саған. Әңгіме жоқ, **супер**”.*

English translation: Erkebulan Myrzabek has proved that he is a real showman. Kesha, thank you. No question, super!”

“Шоумэн” is a borrowed English word (“showman”) which has already been involved into the Kazakh language during long use among youngsters and then in the whole national language.

“Супер” is a modern slang performing as an intensifier by youngsters borrowed from English. As the youngster cannot find any equivalent intensifier for the situation, he chooses the one he usually uses in similar cases. It perfectly expresses the emotion and effect the user intended to produce.

The following video is the new film (2014) of young executive producer and actor Nurtas Adambayev “Kelinka Sabina” (“Daughter-in-law Sabina). This is a comedy about a young lady Sabina who was stolen as a bride according to so-called ancient Kazakh traditions. Sabina is an urban girl who does not speak Kazakh, do not know the traditions and is not used to work. Her new family lives in a village and is not aware of modern life in the city. Sabina faces a new life with new difficulties. The movie is an irony about differences between urban and rural youth, language and culture differences. Despite topicality of the theme, the movie provoked much resonance among the audience. The comments are demonstrated in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Fragment of comments about the movie “Daughter-in-law Sabina”

There were given as positive so negative opinions. I focus on the Kazakh comments interfered by Russian. Russian words are given in bold type and italics.

“Советую кориндер”

English translation: “I advise you to watch it”.

“Советую” is written in Russian as there may be special social situations where this word is mostly used in Russian. The Kazakh variant of this verb “кеңес беремін” sounds too official for such informal setting and not relevant here. That is why the user chooses the one he got used to in such cases.

*“Нұртас Адамбаев ба шығарған киноны кино **позор** қазақтарды мазақтап **тупной** шетелдіктер көрсе осы киноны қалай ойлайды екен. Отееее жаман киноооо”*

English translation: “Has Nurtas Adambayev shot this movie? It is a shame. He is mocking at Kazakhs. What will foreigners think if they are stupid? Very bad movie”

“Позор” is Russian word meaning “shame”. In Russian it sounds more expressive and habitual than in Kazakh, and it certainly has more negative colouring.

“Тыной” is a Russian word meaning “stupid”. The reason of inserting this word may be also more negative connotation and closeness to filthy language.

As a whole, we see that comments are very close to real-life language usage in spoken discourse.

3.5 Chat discourse and youth

Below we present some extracts from Kazakh youth Internet chat which can also be examples of frequent code-switching. Speaker 1 is marked as A, and speaker 2 is named as B.

1. B shares a picture of her favourite actress in the new dress that disappointed B very much. A expresses her opinion about the style.

A: *Ойбай мынау не лук? Ващеее*

B: *Нууу...я бы в таком и мусор выносить не пошла бы((құрсын*

English translation:

A: *Phew! What a look is this?*

B: *Yeah...I would not even take out rubbish in it ((damn it*

2. A and B are discussing A’s boyfriend.

A: *Представляешь, өзім барам, сенімен бармаймын дейді?? Ешқашан олай сөйлеп көрген жоқ маған!*

B: *Айтпа! Анриал*

English translation:

A: *Just imagine, he says he will go there all by himself, without me! He has never talked to me like this!*

B: *I see...Unreal*

“Лук” is a transliterated version of the English word “look” which has already been inserted in modern youth language as a term meaning “style”. It shows a speaker’s knowledge about fashion, taste and unity with modern fashion community.

“Анриал” is slang (from English “unreal”) more and more used as interjection expressing surprise and unexpected situation. It is also used to show that a speaker is modern and somehow knows English.

Influence of the Russian language on Kazakh is reasonable enough, as Kazakh used to have little power in society and was limited by a few functional spheres. English as a lingua franca is an indicator of prestige and progress in modern youth society. It is also accelerated by mass usage of Internet. In the samples above the realistic picture of today’s youth language situation in modern multilingual society is described.

CONCLUSION

Youth discourse presents real state of lively language. Its dynamics increase along with the changes in the life of society. Methods of discourse analysis and sociolinguistic methods in investigating youth language in interaction give opportunity to predict future development of the whole national language. In the analysis of the Internet resources we proved that youth slangs and new inventions in language are fixed in the language as normal. Internet discourse is an interesting phenomenon which combines the features of spoken and written discourses, and can be considered as a separate kind of discourse not belonging to any classical form of typology. In our research e-conversations are presented as real-life samples of everyday youth colloquial speech in our multilingual country. In such multilingual society code-switching, language interference and other sociolinguistic facts also contribute to the

formation of brand new youth discourse and language modifications.

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