Kazakhstani Koreans’ Conflict of Linguistic Identity: In–between the Sovietized and Kazakhstani Citizens

**Abstract**

This paper intends to identify the ethnic Kazakhstani Koreans’ political process of identity formation by exploring their narrative and practice about the state language represented in the course of their becoming the new citizens of a new independent state. The Russophone Kazakhstani Koreans’ inability to speak the official language of their affiliated state is considered there as dissatisfying the basic requirement of citizens of the independent state, so that they are becoming marginalized from the public sphere. Their contradictory attitude that at once demonstrates nominal reception and practical rejection of the obligatory state language unveils a high barrier inside between their self-language and other-language. In this paper, the ethnic Korean group’s conflicting linguistic identity is not seen as a free and simple choice, but as a dynamic struggle and political process in which the subject’s past experiences and memories intersect under the external elements of pressure.

Beyond the cyclical discussions of existing researches on Kazakhstani Korean Diaspora which have been described as homogeneous ethnicity, this paper intends to go beyond the lack of depth in, toward vivid representation of the space of linguistic conflict and tension on the place of life based on research subjects. Based on participatory observation, in-depth interview, and informal interview, the research casts the following questions: what are the historical, social, and political contexts in which Kazakhstani Koreans show the double attitude and conflict over Kazakh, the state language; by what do they define the self-language and the other-language; is the linguistic identity defined by them essential or to essentialize? Our work should be of particular interest to the readers from the Minority, Ethnicity, and Diaspora.

**Keywords**

Ethnic Kazakhstani Koreans, former Soviet Korean’s Russification, linguistic identity, Russian-Kazakh dichotomy