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**THE PERISHING LANGUAGE OF DIASPORA
THE CASE OF KORYO MAR IN KAZAKHSTAN**

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Abstract

Keywords

Korean Diaspora, Koryo mar, education, native language, linguistic assimilation

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Foreword



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The language of the Korean Diaspora in Kazakhstan is radically different from literary languages of South and North Korea. During more than 140 year-long residence of Koreans in the dominating Russian language environment there appeared *Koryo mar* – the language of the Korean Diaspora based on two patois of North Hamgyong dialect. As is known Korean settlers moved to the Russian Primor'ye (Maritime region) mostly from the

bordering on Russia Northern Province Hamgyong, therefore the language they spoke was a dialect used in everyday life. At the same time beginning with the pre-revolutionary period and until the collapse of the Soviet Union the Korean language close to the North Korean standard language was taught in the system of school and university education. After establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of Korea and post-Soviet states and development of trade – economic and cultural – educational ties the North Korean variant gave place to the South Korean literary language. At present in all schools and universities of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Russia Seoul standard language is taught, textbooks and dictionaries compiled in South Korea are used and teachers - native speakers of the language are delegated from the Republic of Korea.

The aim of the present paper is an analysis of interrelations of issues related to Korean language teaching and preservation of the diasporic language – *Koryo mar* among the Koreans of Kazakhstan. It is also necessary to determine main stages of the history of Korean language teaching, reveal their basic content, investigate aspects of the Korean language functioning after the deportation from the Far East to the Central Asia, forecast prospects for preservation and development of the native language among the Korean Diaspora of the modern Kazakhstan.

Outlines of the Korean Diasporic History in Russia and Soviet Union

During the decline of the Choson Dynasty (1392 to 1910), Korea was unprepared to enter the era of capitalism. For nearly a century, Western and Japanese colonial claims aggravated its protracted political, social, and economic crises. In 1905, after its victory over Russia in the Russo-Japanese War, Japan declared the Korean peninsula its protectorate, annexing it five years later. Mass impoverishment and starvation among Korean peasants compelled many to flee the peninsula.¹

The first Korean immigrants appeared in the Russian Far East during the late 1850s and early 1860s. The Russian administration used these Koreans to populate and develop this territory. In the 1880s and 1890s, the Koreans received the right to register as citizens of the Russian empire under the terms of a Russo-Korean treaty determining their status. The number of Korean immigrants to the area grew by the thousands, with many taking the sea route from Pusan to Vladivostok and others the overland route across the river Tumangan. Koreans initially lived in separate villages, and their daily life, social relations, ethnic culture, and language were almost the same as in Korea. The October Revolution of 1917 united workers of all ethnic groups with its slogans of justice,

freedom, and equal rights. Koreans largely supported the Soviet cause, with hundreds sacrificing their lives in World War II, believing this would help lead to the liberation of Korea.²

By the 1930s, the Koreans of the Soviet Far East had established their own identity, culture, and traditions. There were hundreds of Korean agricultural and fishing *Kolkhozes*; Koreans were actively involved in government and social organizations; traditional culture was maintained and developed; the Korean intelligentsia grew numerically and qualitatively; and Korean theaters and other educational and cultural institutions were established. In the soviet Far East there were hundreds of Korean schools and other educational establishments with the Korean language of instruction. Newspapers and magazines were published in Korean; there was the Korean theatre, numerous amateurs' groups. The Korean language functioned in many spheres of life: it was used by the community, families, and in the everyday communication of the compactly residing Koreans.³ Koreans were sovietized and integrated in the new political and socioeconomic system.

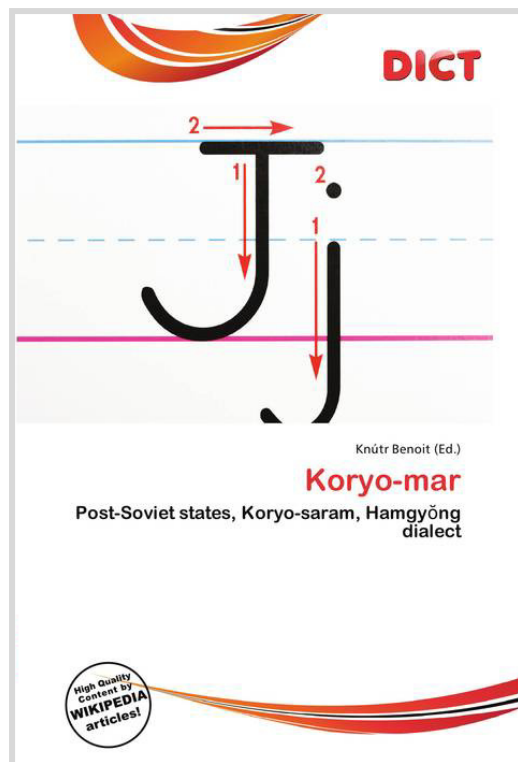
The Koreans were one of the first soviet ethnic minorities to be deported. Top secret order number 1428-326cc of the Soviet government and Communist Party, 'On the Deportation of the Korean Population of the Far East', dated 21 August 1937 and signed by Molotov and Stalin, was a logical continuation of earlier Tsarist and Soviet policies relating to national minority populations. The Koreans settled in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, established the basis for a new life, and contributed to the development of agriculture in these new places.

Shortly after the arrival of the deported Koreans in Kazakhstan the Central Committee of the Communist Party (CCCP) has released the resolution 'On Reorganization of the Ethnic Minorities Schools' (24.01.1938), which was duplicated by the resolution of the CCCP of Kazakhstan under the same title April 8, 1938. It said:

'The Central Committee of the Communist Party considers it to be well established that some bourgeois nationalists have actively operated in the organs of people's education of Kazakhstan and created special national schools (German, Bulgarian, Korean, Uyghur and others) and transformed them into sources of bourgeois-nationalistic, anti-Soviet influence on the children. It was extremely harmful for the cause of the proper training and education, it separated our children from the Soviet life, and deprived them of the possibility to get closer to the Soviet culture and science, put obstacles on their way to further education in colleges and higher educational establishments.'

The directives of the Party were to be realized and on April 13, 1938 the government of Kazakhstan adopted resolution № 353 «On Reorganization of Ethnic Minorities Schools» which became the guidelines for the Narkompros (People's Commissariat of Education).⁴ The so-called 'reorganization' consisted in actual liquidation of the whole system of education in the languages of minorities built during the years of the Soviet power and, above all, the school system of education. Totally 377 Minorities schools of all levels were reorganized including 118 Korean schools.⁵ In the rural areas where mostly or exclusively Koreans lived the native language became just one of the subjects taught at schools.⁶ Because of the reorganization of the Korean schools into ordinary schools, the Korean pedagogical college in Kazalinsk started to work on the basis of the curriculums for ordinary Soviet pedagogical colleges with the Russian or Kazakh languages of instruction.⁷

Korean Language Education in 1930-1950s.



Source: www.morebooks.de

Among the burning problems of the school education at that times the most complicated issues was lack of teachers. Results of the certification of teachers of schools with Korean students revealed that a considerable number of the teachers were allowed to teach at schools though their qualification was inadequate. This situation took place because of lack of qualified teachers. The *Narkompros* of the Republic in accordance with the Resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and *Sovnarkom* (Soviet of People's Commissars) – the government of the Kazakh SSR 'On Cultural and Everyday Service of the Korean Population of the Republic' started to admit the Korean young people to the pedagogical colleges and higher educational establishments. In 1938-1939 academic years in 11 higher educational institutions of the Republic there were 2580 students of different nationalities, the number of Koreans among them being 385 (14,9%).⁸

On May 4, 1938 the *Sovnarkom* of the Kazakh SSR adopted resolution № 4-23 on approval of the plan of construction of a Korean pedagogical institute in Kzyl-Orda. However, the Korean pedagogical institute shared the fate of the Korean schools and the pedagogical college. Besides, in the autumn of 1937 when Koreans arrived in Kazakhstan the number of students of the institute was cut from 830 to 500.⁹ From 1938/39 academic year the Korean pedagogical institute started to use Russian as the language of instruction, though during the next 10 years the majority of students and teachers were Koreans.

A separate issue which remained acute during the whole history of the Korean education was lack or poor quality of school textbooks and literature in the Korean language. Shortly before the deportation basic school textbooks numbering several dozens were translated into Korean. In big quantities were published in Korean all kinds of socio-political books, brochures and classical literature.¹⁰

Leaving behind many necessary and valuable things, the Koreans brought with them to Kazakhstan textbooks and other books with the hope that their children would be able to use them in future. On December 27, 1939 the Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party adopted a special resolution 'On the Korean Literature' which stated: *To allow all book-selling organizations to write off for recycling all textbooks in Korean and the literature, the content of which is not fit for the conditions of Kazakhstan and is out-of-date.* According to the resolution the Glavlit of the Kazakh SSR – the main organ of censorship for all published materials was to 'withdraw from the bookselling network and libraries the books in Korean which are politically incorrect and the authors of which are enemies of the people (the list is attached)'.¹¹

Thus all educational literature in Korean was written off for recycling and liquidated: 120,052 copies

of textbooks of 134 titles for all the subjects including 17, 325 Korean language textbooks for different levels of learning. A big number of Korean books including rare historical books were destroyed in the libraries of Kzyl-Orda pedagogical institute.¹² Many Koreans, who had been repressed before and during the bitter time of deportation, destroyed Korean books in their home libraries themselves as even the mere fact of keeping such books at home was enough for imprisonment.

During the first 1937-1938 academic year after the deportation the Korean settlement schools in Kazakhstan operated on the basis of the curriculum for national schools approved by the *Narkompros* of the RSFSR. However, taking into account some specific features of the academic work, cultural and everyday peculiarities, and ethnic culture of the Korean population the *Narkompros* of the Kazakh SSR introduced partial changes in the curriculum. The essence of the changes was – to begin learning the Russian language at elementary and secondary schools with Korean contingent of students from the second grade and to learn it till the 10th grade. There were more classes of the Russian language than in other Minorities schools: 2nd – 6th grades – 6 classes per week; 7th grade – 4 and 8th - 10th grades – 2 classes. Correspondingly to the increased number of Russian language classes the number of classes of the native language was reduced.

In 1930-40s Korean as a subject called 'the native language' was taught at nearly all schools with a considerable number of the Korean students. During that period it was possible due to such favorable conditions as compact settlement of the rural Korean population, availability of teachers, textbooks and other literature in Korean.¹³ However, the situation was aggravated in the mid 1950-s when Korean language classes gradually started to disappear from the schools of Kazakhstan. It was due to many different reasons. First of all, one should bear in mind that the Soviet policy in the sphere of education, national relations and functioning of languages was aimed at further standardization and unification. It concerned not only 'the socialist content but also the national form' of the Soviet literature, art, and people's education etc. Domination of the Russian language in all spheres of life in the Soviet Union was evident; therefore the policy of 'russification' in education was of a voluntary-obligatory nature. It revealed itself as follows. According to the school curriculum classes of a native language were not considered as leading subjects and often were optional, there were no final exams. A good command of one's native tongue to the detriment of the Russian language could worsen one's prospects for getting further education and professional career. Thus neither the children nor the parents were motivated to learn the Korean language and they themselves refused to learn it.

However, a part of the Korean intelligentsia was worried about the fate of the national culture and language and they wrote letters to Moscow and the republican Party-government leadership about the necessity of making decisions on many urgent issues related to the activity of Korean kolkhozes, newspaper 'Lenin Kichi',¹⁴ Korean theatre and education of Korean children.

The CCCP of Kazakhstan ordered the Ministry of Education to examine the situation. The Ministry admitted that 'children of the Korean nationality should get knowledge and skills in their native language and literature'. However, it considered 'introduction of the Korean language and literature in the school curriculum in addition to the existing subjects impossible because children would be overloaded with classes'. Therefore a proposal was made: to introduce classes of the Korean language at schools with Korean students instead of classes of the Kazakh language. On December,

26, 1953 was adopted a resolution of the Secretariat of the CCCP of Kazakhstan 'On teaching the Korean language and literature at some schools with Korean students'. It satisfied 'the request of the Ministry of Education of the Kazakh SSR' and allowed 'to introduce at some schools with students of the Korean nationality classes of the Korean language and literature'.¹⁵

One of the reasons for such voluntary-forced oblivion of the native language was: from the second half of the 1940-s to the mid 50-s in Kazakhstan there were considerable losses in the number of teachers of the Korean language and specialists in other branches of industry, culture, health protection etc. with a good command of the language. It was connected with sending of the most educated, professional, experienced and loyal people of the Korean nationality on special missions to Sakhalin, Maritime and Khabarovsk provinces and the North Korea for rendering assistance in construction of the new system of the Soviet model.¹⁶

Thus the end of the 1930-s – beginning of 1950-s the history of Korean language education in Kazakhstan is characterized both by great achievements and big losses. Development of the school education among the Korean settlers was taking place in the context of their economic adaptation on the new land where the leading factor was the command-administrative system of management of all the processes in the Soviet state. The war against the fascist Germany and the victory in it, pressing tasks of restoration of the destroyed economy, liberation of the Southern Sakhalin and Korea from the Japanese colonial regime, death of Stalin, revelation of the personality cult and many other events directly influenced all aspects of the education of Koreans in Kazakhstan.

School Education and Korean Language in 1950-1960s.

Both at schools with the Korean contingent of students and other republican schools the universal secondary education was realized in accordance with the Law of 1959 and had two stages: the first stage – 8-year labor polytechnic school; the second stage – getting full secondary education (10 grades). The formerly existing network of 7-year schools and secondary schools with Korean students and their territorial distribution made it possible for all children to study for 7 years. Therefore in order to realize the plan of the transfer to the universal 8- year school education it was necessary to transform all 7-year schools into 8-year schools. From 1959 to 1963 seventy 8-year schools with the Korean students were formed, allowing to study in the 8th grade of 85% by 1960, and by 1961-62 academic year of 93% of all 7th grade graduates. By 1961-62 academic years all 7-year schools had been transformed into 8-year schools. In 1961-1962 academic years in the republic there were thirty elementary schools, seventy 8-year schools and twenty five secondary schools – totally 125 schools numbering 17544 students. By 1964/65 the total number of students at all kinds of schools had reached 18249.¹⁷

One of the most important and complicated issues in the sphere of education has always been the issue of choosing the language of instruction. From the second half of 1950s the issue of functioning of the Korean language in the Soviet Union became extremely acute. It was then when in Kazakhstan started the period of an accelerated loss of the native language which was determined by a number of objective reasons and subjective factors.

As one of the objective reasons for it we can conditionally admit the fact that the level of compact residence of Koreans in the rural areas had lowered. In such rural areas used to function national schools and classes and the native language was taught as an academic subject. The paradox of the

situation is that if we approach the issue of compact living from purely geographical, space-territorial point of view, then the level of concentration of the Korean population had not reduced but on the contrary increased. The rural population used to live in numerous regions and villages located in dozens or hundreds of kilometers from each other and the urban Diaspora settled within the limits of one town.

The most important was the subjective factor, which found its reflection in the policy pursued by the Party and government and aimed at 'socialist nations getting closer', strengthening the role of the Russian language as 'the language of the inter-ethnic communication'. After the death of 'the Farther of peoples' and the 20th Congress of the Communist Party which condemned the personality cult, came a short period of 'Khrushchev's Thaw' when the first attempts to become free from the totalitarian regime were made. The rights of the deported peoples unfoundedly accused of foreign espionage and treachery were partially restored. Peoples of the Caucasus were allowed to return to their native lands. Creative and scientific intelligentsia: writers, poets, actors, artists, journalists and humanitarian scholars took advantage of the short-term, relative freedom and created new works free from the orthodox, ideologically correct content.

Some representatives of the Korean intelligentsia began to realize their responsibility and found courage to address a request to the central and republican Party-government organs to rehabilitate the Koreans politically and legally and to create conditions for the national –cultural development of the Diaspora. The first requests to the Central Committee of the Communist Party and ministries to assist in solving some problems, or to provide material or financial assistance were written by the editorial board of the newspaper 'Lenin Kichi' and the Korean theatre.¹⁸

The active position of the representatives of the Korean intelligentsia could not fail to attract the attention of the Party – government leadership in Moscow and the republic. On May, 20, 1958 the Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist party of Kazakhstan adopted the resolution 'On strengthening mass-political and cultural- educational work among the Korean population of the republic'.¹⁹ The resolution, first of all, concerned Kzyl-Orda, Taldy-Kurgan, South Kazakhstan, Dzhambul and Alma- Ata oblast' committees of the Party which at the end of May-June, 1958 held Party meetings in order to discuss the plan of events for realization of the resolution of May,20 of the Central Committee of the Communist party of Kazakhstan.²⁰

In the above-mentioned oblasts the Party organizations were to organize and strengthen 'the mass-political and cultural-educational work among the Korean population in their native language'. A separate section envisaged 'introduction from the new 1958/59 academic year in the places of high concentration of the Korean population teaching of the Korean language for the children of the Korean nationality at schools'.

Thus at the end of 1950s – middle of 1960s there was a campaign directed at solving some problems related to the culture and language of the Soviet Koreans. However, the most important demands in the letters and appeals of the Korean intelligentsia: formation of a national-cultural or territorial autonomy, creation of the Korean cultural centers was not satisfied. The events held were of a temporary character and mainly concerned insignificant, secondary aspects of the socio-cultural development of the Korean population. One of the most considerable outcomes of the initiatives

undertaken by some representatives of the Korean Diaspora was drawing attention to the problems of teaching the native language.

At rural schools where Koreans lived compactly and there was a considerable number of Korean students the Korean language and literature were re-introduced into the curriculum as separate subjects. However, the whole process looked like a short-term campaign characterized by lack of responsibility on the side of the officials in the sphere of education, lack of qualified teachers with a good command of both Russian and Korean and the methods of teaching languages, poor quality of curriculums, textbooks and dictionaries. Thus it was not possible to radically improve the situation with teaching Korean at schools. However, certain changes had taken place.

In 1959-1966 in Kzyl-Orda oblast' were re-opened and functioned 142 Korean language groups in the 2nd - 8th grades numbering 2 389 students. At schools of Alma-Ata oblast' in the first half of 1960 there were 109 Korean language groups with 2 284 students. Besides, the Korean language was taught at several schools of Chimkent and Dzhabul oblasts. At the schools of Kzyl Orda oblast' there were enough qualified teachers of the Korean language. Out of 14 teachers 3 persons had higher education, 2 – incomplete higher education and 9 - secondary specialized pedagogical education.²¹

Originally in the 2nd-4th grades for teaching the Korean language was used ABC book compiled by Kim Pen Hwa²² and the grammar of the Korean language for the 3rd grade written by Kim Pen Hwa and Hwan Yun Din.²³ In senior grades they used textbooks and readers published at the beginning of 1950s. At the end of 1950s new books for reading in Korean²⁴ and a school Russian-Korean dictionary²⁵ were published. In the early 1960s in the Uzbek SSR they published a new ABC book and a Korean language textbook for 3rd -4th grades consisting of 130 lessons: 65 lessons for the 3rd grade and 65 for the 4th. The textbook had an alphabetical dictionary of 595 units: 274 – for the 3rd and 321 – for the 4th grade.²⁶ Though the textbook was criticized by many Korean language teachers and not without a reason, it, to a certain extent, helped in teaching and learning the Korean language.²⁷ Unfortunately textbooks were published in small quantities and there was a deficit of them. The Ministry of education of the Kazakh SSR made serious mistakes in the organization of teaching of the Korean language. For instance, the Korean language curriculum was non-existent which meant that each teacher had to make his own plan and work on its basis individually.²⁸ Besides, two classes per week for learning the Korean language were not enough for getting deep knowledge of it. If a student got a poor mark for Korean, he still could study in the next grade. All this had led to low motivation in learning the Korean language.

In the country there were no specialized institutes, departments, pedagogical colleges for training teachers of Korean. The Ministry of education should have organized training courses for teachers of the Korean language, methodological groups and societies of the Korean language. The Republican and oblast' institutes for improvement of the qualification of the teachers totally ignored the issues of the methods of teaching Korean as a native language at the republican schools.

The problems and difficulties had accumulated and finally the Ministry of education issued an order "on the situation with teaching of the native language for the children of the Korean nationality in Kzyl-Orda oblast'." It outlined a large-scale complex of measures. However, even the full and strict implementation of the resolution could not solve the language problem of the Koreans of Kazakhstan;

stop the process of alienation and loss of the national language. The situation of the Korean population in the Central Asian republics was very much the same.²⁹

The administrative-command system ignored the national demands including development of the education. A number of forced actions aimed against minor peoples were undertaken; they were incompatible with the announced principles of internationalism and respect of equal rights for all the peoples and national minorities. On a large scale the people were forced to actively use the Russian language and culture, the rights of numerous ethnic groups and nationalities were limited. At the same time the school education in the Russian language made it easier for the young people to get higher education. In 1938 all Korean students, totally 250 persons who studied Korean at the Kzyl-Orda pedagogical institute had to graduate as if they had completed their education though some of them were only in their second or third year. In the second half of 1950s when the limitations for traveling and choosing the place of residence were removed, the Korean youth started to go to study to different towns in Kazakhstan and even far away to the leading universities of Moscow, Leningrad, and Novosibirsk etc.

Decline of Korean Language Education in 1960-1980s.

During the following twenty years – from the mid 1960s to mid 1980s the Korean language sank into oblivion again. The only exceptions were several dozens of students and post-graduate students who learnt the Korean language at the universities of Moscow, Leningrad and Vladivostok. The Korean schools which functioned during the post-war period in Sakhalin had ceased to exist by that time. In Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan the process of losing the native language had acquired an irreversible character and it became evident not only in the sphere of education but also in the everyday and family life. Koreans, especially of younger age started to communicate among themselves mostly in Russian.

In the 1970s-1980s the school education of the *Koryo saram* in Kazakhstan finally lost its organizational specificity, and of the former term 'schools with the Korean contingent of students' disappeared from the lexicon of the documentation of the republican, regional and district organs of education. During that period took place the final integration of the urban Korean children in the 'Russian schools' at which they constituted the minority as concerned the number. Only in two or three kolkhozes and *sovkhoses* (soviet farm) of the Karatal region of Taldy-Kurgan oblast' there remained some schools with a big number of Korean students. Common stereotypes at that time were that disappearance of compact areas of Korean settlements in the rural regions or multinational composition of secondary schools students had led to impossibility or lack of necessity in schools with the Korean language of instruction.

The issues of education are closely connected with the development and functioning of the language as a whole. Changes in the ethno-language behavior of the Koreans in Kazakhstan were characterized by two interrelated tendencies: intensive proliferation of the Russian language and loss of the native language. The share of persons who considered Russian their native language was increasing in the qualitative-quantitative aspect. The data of the 1970 census contains statistics about a free command of a second language of the peoples of the Soviet Union. They reflected the universal knowledge of the Russian language among the Soviet Koreans. In 1970 more than 80% of those who admitted that Korean was their native language actually could freely speak only Russian. There were qualitative changes in the level of knowledge of the native language among Kazakhstani Koreans. The

data of the censuses do not provide any information regarding the age and/or professional differentiation of the language behavior of different nationalities in the USSR; however, it is evident that by early 1970s the written form of the literary Korean was familiar to a very insignificant number of Koreans of the older generation. On the contrary, all Koreans of different ages – from school age to pensioners knew the Russian language in both oral and written forms.³⁰

If one can rely on the data of the 1989 census, it will turn out that 51, 7% of the Korean population of Kazakhstan considered Korean their native language. Actually the fact that they said that Korean was their native language did not mean that they could speak or write in it. In Alma-Ata the data of the census regarding distribution of some nationalities according to age, native and second language of the peoples of the USSR included Koreans; it makes it possible to confirm this statement. About 40% of the Korean children in the age group of up to 14 years could neither read nor write in Korean but considered it their 'native' language.³¹

Perestroika and Revival of Korean Language

A new impetus for revival of the interest in the historical past, national culture and language was given by Gorbachev's perestroika which similarly to Khrushchev's Thaw made it possible to discuss openly these sore points. 'The ethnic renaissance' embraced all peoples of the country without exception including Koreans. One of the priority issues of the national-cultural revival was the issue of the language. The office of the newspaper 'Lenin Kichi' was piled with letters from readers with requests to start publishing lessons of Korean, to help with textbooks, dictionaries and to organize language courses. The active interest of the Korean population made I.P. Khan, editor-in-chief of 'Lenin Kichi' send a letter to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan. The letter described the critical situation in teaching and functioning of the Korean language in the republic and his vision of solving this problem.³²

The Central Committee ordered the Ministry of education to calculate the number of Korean children at schools in Kzyl-Orda, Chimkent, Dzhambul, Alma-Ata and Taldy-Kurgan oblasts in order to determine how many teachers of Korean were needed. The 1988 year plan envisaged training of Korean language teachers in one of the pedagogical institutes.

On May, 25, 1987 the Ministry of education made a report to the Central Committee «On teaching Korean as the native language at schools of the republic». It said that at that moment there were 112 000 Koreans in Kazakhstan concentrated mainly in Kzyl-Orda oblast' – 16 900, Taldy-Kurgan oblast' – 15 800, Chimkent oblast'-15 100, Dzhambul oblast' – 14 900, Karaganda oblast'-13 900. according to the report the Korean language was taught in 7 schools of Kzyl-Orda oblast' - 770 children and in one school in Taldy-Kurgan oblast' – 100. However, the data proved to be incorrect. For instance, in July 1987 it became clear that in Kzyl-Orda oblast' there were only three schools where Korean was taught.

According to the more precise data the Korean language was taught only in two schools in Kzyl-Orda oblast' - 162 children and one school in Taldy-Kurgan oblast' - 29, though the total number of Korean schoolchildren only in 4 oblasts: Dzhambul, Kzyl-Orda, Taldy-Kurgan and Chimkent was at least 4000 people.³³

The authors of the report came to the following conclusions: firstly, 'as a result of lack of due attention, teachers, poor quality of textbooks' the situation with the Korean language was

catastrophic; secondly, it was necessary to improve the situation but there were no qualified specialists who were able to solve the problems in the republic; thirdly, all attempts to get assistance from the Ministry of education of the USSR and Uzbekistan failed as the situation with the Korean language in other republics was analogous.

Thus, the republic could rely only on its own forces. In many oblasts in late 1980s – early 1990s were opened Korean cultural centers; they put as a priority the revival of the ethnic culture and the national language.

A new Demand on Korean Language in the independent Kazakhstan

'Perestroika' and 'Glasnost' have caused explosion of interest in the history, ethnic culture and a national language of all Soviet peoples. At the end of 1980s - the beginning of 1990s the native language boom was observed - numerous Korean language classes and circles were organized by the Korean cultural Centers, Korean Christian missionary churches.

For example in Kzyl-Orda oblast 34 groups learning Korean language were formed in three high schools and also five language circles in three kolkhozes and one in the garment factory. A 'Korean language Sunday school' was established in the Kzyl-Orda pedagogical institute where studied the future students of the Department of Korean Language opened in 1991.

In Ushtobe 'Kwangju Korean language school' was opened, the cost of the building, furniture and equipment was covered by the South Korean businessmen from Kwangju (city in South Korea). The school had a children's library with a collection of fiction and learning literature, reference books, dictionaries and journals received from the Republic of Korea. There was a language laboratory, granted by the head of the oblast's administration.³⁴

Ways of solving the problem in different places vary according to regions and available resources. The most favorable conditions regarding availability of teachers existed in southern oblasts. In western and northern oblasts lack of Korean language teachers was one of the main reasons hindering organization of students' groups. For instance, in Karaganda oblast where the number of Koreans was about 11500 people, only 75 of them studied Korean. In Eastern Kazakhstan oblast there was one group for adults (30 persons) and an elective course in the university; in Pavlodar oblast there were two Korean language groups.³⁵

On the whole in 1992 the Korean language was taught to about 3 thousand people, in 1994 – more than 5 thousand. In 1995/96 academic year the Korean language was offered as a elective course in 17 schools of Kazakhstan with 95 groups numbering 1450 students.

Opening of Korean language departments in a number of universities and colleges of Kazakhstan was of great importance. At present Korean language specialists are trained at the department of Oriental Studies of the KazNU, philological departments of AGU named after Abai, Kzyl- Orda and Ust Kamenogorsk universities, Kazakh state university of International relations and world languages, university of world journalism, Academy of the National Security Committee etc. In a number of universities and at some departments the Korean language was taught as a 'foreign language' or 'second oriental language'. The total number of students at Korean language departments of Kazakh universities is about 200.

In 1991 in Almaty the Center of Education of the Republic of Korea was established. It began to play a very important role in teaching the Korean language to the Koreans of Kazakhstan and training Korean language teachers.³⁶

However, a sharp increase in the number of students has told on the quality of the Korean language teaching and training specialists with a high level of language competence. Many teachers do not know the language well enough; they lack practical experience and methods of language teaching.

Training of Korean language specialists is done not only in Kazakhstan but also in the Republic of Korea. About two dozens of young Koreans were trained there attending six- and nine-month language courses. More than a dozen scholars were able to attend long-term study courses in the leading universities of the country. Many students of Korean departments went on short-term trips to Seoul.

Special mention should be made of the purposeful work done by the branches of the Association of Koreans of Kazakhstan (AKK) and Korean cultural centers in Taldykorganskaya, South Kazakhstan and Dzhambylskaya oblasts.³⁷

Despite some primary success a number of issues remain to be solved. First of all, it should be noted that there is a sharp decline in the interest in learning the language. If in the past there were too many of those willing to attend the language courses, five or six years later many of them started to doubt. Strange as it might seem, it is Korean parents who think that there is no point in spending time and efforts for their children learning the language as it is not in demand today.

The problem of lack of highly qualified teachers is still pressing. Korean pastors and KOICA volunteers are rendering assistance, first of all as native speakers of the Korean language but there is a need in local teachers, graduates of Korean departments who very well know both the language itself and methods of its teaching. Another problem is that the brightest Korean language students after graduation often start working as interpreters in some companies because university teachers are underpaid. It also should be added that so far there are good textbooks, teach-yourself books, computer programs; there are no frequency dictionaries, phrase-books etc. Though in sovereign Kazakhstan teaching of the Korean language was resumed after half-a-century break, the initial period is marked by both achievements and problems that still demand solution.

Despite some success in organization of mass Korean language learning the result is still far from what is really wanted. An explosion of enthusiasm and interest has faded but quantitative indicators have not turned into qualitative ones. Long time, great efforts and purpose-oriented everyday work is needed to make up for the losses in Korean language competence caused by the long period of forced oblivion.

Status of the 'rodnoy yasyk' (Native Language)

Before the deportation of Koreans to Kazakhstan and liquidation of the system of education in their national language, Korean had been considered one of the languages of the peoples of the USSR. Later for a long time the Korean language existed in its oral, colloquial form mainly and had no official status but in the Soviet statistics on the published matter it was referred to the group 'Languages of the peoples of foreign countries'. This to a certain extent corresponded to the objective reality as books published in Korean were mainly socio-political, classical Russian and Soviet literature translated into the North Korean language standard.³⁸

As the Korean language was not taught at the Soviet schools and is not taught now at schools in Kazakhstan as a separate academic subject, its status as a language of a national minority is radically different from the status of the German language which has always been classified as 'a foreign language'. The German language as an academic subject is taught at many schools and universities in Kazakhstan.

The Korean language has the status of 'the native language' of the Koreans of Kazakhstan and its functions are quite limited: one weekly newspaper, one 20-minute radio program three times a week and one weekly 30-minute TV program; in the sphere of art – Korean theatre; in literature – 1-2 books of short novels or poems; in the education – Korean departments in some universities and colleges.

What is the nature of 'the native language' of the Korean Diaspora of Kazakhstan? The language of their ancestors and people of the oldest generation is a unique dialect which roots go back to the 15th century. In the everyday life and also in linguistics this dialect is called 'Koryo mar' and its present state is very close to lethal. *Koryo mar* in Kazakhstan and in other countries of the post-Soviet space is doomed to disappearance and it is not possible to re-animate it today. Thus speaking about 'the native language' one should mean the Seoul standard of the modern literary language which for the Korean children in Kazakhstan is none the less 'foreign' than English or Arabic. Then we can speak about the modern literary Korean as 'a genetically native language' or if we translate it from English precisely - 'a hereditary language'. Thus we will speak not about the revival but about learning of the 'national', 'genetically native', 'hereditary' etc. in other words different language which only 10 years ago was not known in Kazakhstan.

Using the socio-linguistic terminology of H. Kloss we can speak about *Koryo mar* as a specific form of a 'roofless dialect' (from the German – obdachlos). As opposed to the dialects of the Korean peninsula having 'a roof', protection on the side of the literary Korean, the dialect of the Koreans of Kazakhstan separated from the language nucleus is deprived of such protection.³⁹ The alien ethnic environment, laws of the language contacts have led to the appearance in the lexical fund of *Koryo mar* of many loans from the Russian and other languages. *Koryo mar* practically has no written form, it is not present in radio programs or theatre stage, it is not used in mass media or taught at schools – it is dying. Another 15-20 years and there will be no more speakers of this unique linguistic phenomenon.

Sociolinguistic Features of the Korean Diaspora

We should consider at least in general the existing ethno linguistic situation of the Koreans of Kazakhstan and namely its composites: language competence, language behavior and language orientation. The language competence becomes evident in the level of command of this or that language. If we compare the level of command of Korean, Kazakh and Russian it will be clear that for the absolute majority of the *Koryo saram* Russian is the primary language. 90-95% of Koreans can use it freely. Actually there are no children or adult *Koryo saram* who cannot speak Russian. The share of Koreans who can master Kazakh language well is 2-3% of the total number.

Such changes in the language competence to a great extent depended on the attitude of the Soviet Koreans themselves who were not at all eager to preserve and develop their language and cultural heritage. The Koreans demonstrated a stable interest in learning Russian because it could pave the

way to their further career. Such accelerated as compared to other national minorities shift to the language code of the dominating ethnic environment is characteristic of all foreign Korean Diasporas on the whole, the typical feature of which is a high level of acculturation and language assimilation. In the language behavior of the Koreans the Russian language began to dominate already in the 1950s-1970s and the process had been going on for the following twenty years. Functioning of the Korean language was getting more and more limited and at present it is used mainly in the family and communication of the elderly generation.

The census data revealed a decrease in the share of the Koreans who admitted that Korean was their native language: in 1959 - 68,6%, in 1970 - 64%, in 1979 - 56, 1%, and in 1989 - 51, 7%. However, it should be again noted that to say that Korean is one's native language does not mean the ability to use it in the everyday life. A language, as is known is not only a universal means of communication, transfer of information etc. It is part and parcel and symbol of the ethnic conscience that is why recognizing the Korean language as their native language was caused by the ethno-psychological factors, the ethnic identity was revealed according to the formula – 'I am Korean – the Korean language is my native language.' The socio-linguistic researches carried out lately among the Korean Diaspora confirmed the a priori conclusion of the nonconformity of the objective language competence with the subjective recognition of a language as the native language.

The language competence and the character of the language behavior differ as to age and social groups of the Korean Diaspora of Kazakhstan which is proved by the data of the questionnaires and censuses. In the age group of 1-25 years the overwhelming majority of Koreans cannot speak Korean at all. The age group of 25-60 years is characterized by a passive command of the language; they can understand simple everyday topics. Only the oldest age group of 60-80 years who lived in the ethno-compact rural environment and learnt the basics of the written national language can, to a certain extend, speak and write in Korean. For generations of the Koreans who were born and socialized in Kazakhstan the native language is Russian and for the majority of the deported generation who can be referred to bilinguals in a certain sense, Russian has become the primary and Korean – secondary language.

As concerns the differentiation of the language competence according to the social status, in the primary division of the people into two groups: intellectual and physical labor, the first one, without any doubt, is behind the second as concerns the level of the Korean language competence. Physical labor is characteristic of the Koreans in the agrarian sector and as is well-known, it is the village that is the ethno homogenous reservoir where the ethnic culture and language are better preserved as compared to an ethnically mixed urban 'melting pot'. Among intellectuals the language competence was preserved and developed by those who by their profession were occupied either in the Korean language mass media (newspaper, radio, TV) or in the Korean theatre.

Speaking about the level of competence in the Korean language one should bear in mind that a part of the modern Korean Diaspora of Kazakhstan is composed of Sakhalin Koreans and some former North Koreans. Their knowledge of the Korean language is significantly different from that of the majority of Koreans. Representatives of this group due to their knowledge of the literary Korean used to hold the leading positions in the Korean institutions of culture, art and literature.

The results of some pilot questionnaires rotated among *Koryo saram* by Korean Diasporic Associations in Kazakhstan show their desire to regenerate their native language as the basis of the ethnicity. A big number of respondents have taken advantage of the opportunity to study the native language which appeared recently. Even a bigger number of the respondents would like to study the Korean language themselves and consider it necessary for their children to know the language. The significance of the issue of the revival of the Korean language is reflected in the fact that the majority of the respondents (over 80 %) consider it the priority to develop the system of education in Korean, publish literature, and broadcast radio and TV programs.



Students of the Korean Department of KazNU



Korean Text Book of Late 1950s

Korean Text Book of Late 1950s



School in the Korean Kolkhose of Uzbekistan in the Late 1950s © JofEL & G. Kim



Korean Theatre in Kazakhstan © JofEL & G. Kim



Korean Youth Reading Korean Newspaper in Kazakhstan © JofEL & G. Kim

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