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Language Change in Central Asia

Contributions to the Sociology of Language



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List of abbreviations

ASSR	Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic
EMI	English Medium Instruction
FSU	Former Soviet Union
LOI	Language of Instruction
LWC	Language of Wider Communication
MOI	Medium of Instruction
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SSR	Soviet Socialist Republic
UN	United Nations
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Ruth Bartholomä

9 The Construction of the Tatar Nation in the Debate About the Introduction of Latin Script in the Republic of Tatarstan

Abstract: This chapter examines the construction of nation-building in language policy discourse by focusing on the role of script change in the introduction of a Latin script in the Republic of Tatarstan (Russian Federation). The choice of a certain alphabet can create emotions like a feeling of the unity of a nation or the necessity of distancing the own group from another; language policy thus serves as a mean for nation-building. Scripts are, as Sebba (2007: 39) stressed, “particularly powerful identity markers, as they often have associations with particular secular and – especially – religious cultures, and this may evoke strong positive or negative reactions.” This was the case with the planned script change for Tatar. This change was intended approximately 15 years ago, but was forbidden at the federal level of the Russian Federation. In the discourse about these events, different connotations and ideas of a Tatar nation were expressed. In contrast to similar processes among other speech communities, the situation was and is complicated by the fact that Tatarstan is part of the Russian Federation and has only limited possibilities to pursue its own policies as the script change example shows. The aim of this chapter is to show that the shift from Cyrillic to Latin evoked strong reactions at different levels. By examining the discourse, it becomes clear that the idea of one Tatar nation united by – amongst other factors – a common language and script was and still is existent; nevertheless, it often remains unclear who is included in the idea of a “Tatar nation”.

Keywords: Tatar script reform; language policy; nation-state building

1 Introduction

In the 1990s, the Republic of Tatarstan (Russian Federation) planned to change its script system from a Cyrillic alphabet that had been used for the Tatar language since 1939 to a Latin script. The introduction of a Latin-based alphabet had been the object of long-lasting discussions which resulted in the adoption of a law at the republican level in 1999 (Minnullin et al. 2006). The law stated

that the new script was to be introduced over the course of the next years. This step caused serious resistance at the federal level and resulted in a change of the Russian Federation's Language Law (Minnullin et al. 2006: 74–75). In the broader debates about these events, it soon became clear that many people did not see the introduction of a Latin script as a decision based on linguistic reasons as Tatar politicians and intellectuals argued. Rather, opponents viewed the decision as political, arguing that a script change would be a potential danger to the unity of the Tatar nation as well as a threat to the unity of the Russian Federation.

This chapter analyzes some of the conflicting discourses about script change with a focus on arguments that refer to different aspects of nation-building. It first provides an account of the script choice developments in the Republic of Tatarstan, followed by a brief overview of the theoretical and methodological background. The article then continues to analyze the discourses that can be seen in statements from different sources and positions of the debate. The following issues of dispute are discussed in detail: How did the discussants view the attempt to introduce a Latin script? Was it a step of dissociation from the Russian element, i.e., an attempt to strengthen the perception of the own group as different from another? And has the awareness of the importance of this issue changed over the years? How was the Tatar nation constructed, and which arguments were used in the debate around how the introduction of a Latin script would contribute to – or disrupt – the idea of Tatar nation-building, especially with the consideration that two-thirds of Tatars of the Russian Federation do not live in the Republic of Tatarstan? This chapter argues that changes in the relation between the federal and the local levels have caused a shift in the discourse of distancing, while the issue of Tatars living outside Tatarstan remains important.

2 Background information

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and the subsequent independence of the former Union Republics (FSU) in the beginning of the 1990s, several of the newly emerged states that had a Turkic language as their titular language switched from a Cyrillic to a Latin alphabet.¹ And in other states, script changes

¹ Azerbaijan “adopted a modified version of the Latin script for the official Azerbaijani alphabet” in 1991 (Garibova 2009: 17). Uzbekistan adopted the “Law on the Introduction of the Uzbek Alphabet Based on Latin Graphics” in September of 1993 (Azimova 2008: 194). And Turkmenistan “began crafting the ‘New National Turkmen Alphabet’ in the early 1990s”

were discussed. Choosing a Latin script was considered a highly symbolic step. Clement (2008: 171) called the newly adopted Latin alphabet for Turkmen an “emblem of independence,” and Wright (2004: 51) highlights that “[c]hanging alphabet can also be a way of reaffirming identity or signaling new orientations.” Thus, an alphabet change is not only a purely linguistically based decision, but a step which is both influenced by and influences political and social debates and discourses. However, script choice had an additional role in the nation-building processes of the newly established republics. Selecting the titular language as the state language and choosing a different script system created a new awareness for the often long neglected language. At the same time, this also created a group mentality within the titular nation centered on the language of the ethnic group.

A script change was also planned for the Tatar language in the Republic of Tatarstan at the end of the 1990s. There was a fundamental difference between Tatarstan and the other primarily Central Asian republics: Tatarstan was (and is) not an independent state. However, as a *субъект* or, more precisely, an autonomous republic of the Russian Federation, it had attained a degree of autonomy in the course of the 1980s and 1990s. The Tatars, the titular nationality of this republic (also called “Volga Tatars” or “Kazan Tatars”), are the largest minority group within the Russian Federation. Even though about 62% of the Tatars who live in the Russian Federation reside outside the borders of the Republic of Tatarstan, they still constitute the majority of the republic’s population.² According to the 2010 Russian Census, Tatarstan’s population is about 53.2% Tatar, 39.7% Russian, and the rest is composed of other ethnicities, e.g., Chuvashes, Udmurts and others (Federal’naia Sluzhba Gosudarstvennoi Statistiki 2010).

After presenting its Declaration of Independence in 1990 (Verkhovnyi Sovet Respubliki Tatarstan 1990), Tatarstan’s leaders pursued emancipation from the Russian Federation. They did not sign the Federation Treaty in 1992, as did President Yeltsin and almost all other federal unit leaders. However, in 1994, Tatarstan and Russia signed a power-sharing agreement (Cashaback 2008: 251),

(Clement 2008: 175). Interestingly, despite the fact that two different conferences took place in order to create a common alphabet, each state introduced its own version of the Latin script, unlike the situation in the 1920s, when a “unified alphabet” was established for all Turkic languages of the Soviet Union (Garipov and Faller 2003: 180; Sebba 2006: 105).

² The exact data from the 2010 Russian Census are: 5, 310, 649 Tatars in the Russian Federation (Federal’naia Sluzhba Gosudarstvennoi Statistiki 2010); 2, 012, 571 Tatars in Tatarstan (Federal’naia Sluzhba Gosudarstvennoi Statistiki 2010). According to these figures, 37.9% of the Tatars living in the Russian Federation resided in the Republic of Tatarstan; the others mostly lived either in those units of the Russian Federation adjacent to Tatarstan, in Siberia, or in large cities like Moscow and St. Petersburg.

which made comparatively far-reaching concessions.³ But as the Tatar historian Iskander Giljasov (1994: 199) emphasizes, the often-used keyword “sovereignty” did not mean complete and unlimited autonomy from the Russian Federation; rather, this reflected Tatarstan’s ambitions to increase its political status. This was also stressed by Mintimer Shaimiev, the president of Tatarstan, who explained that the referendum which was held in 1992 “was not about secession from Russia and was not intended to change the territorial integrity of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic” (Suleymanova 2010: 46). Nevertheless, in the referendum on Tatarstan’s status, 61.4% of its population supported the demand that Tatarstan should be a “sovereign state, subject to international law” (Suleymanova 2010: 46).

Regarding its language policies, the first decisions taken in the 1990s focused on equalizing the official status of the Tatar and Russian languages. With the Tatarstan’s Declaration of Independence, passed in 1990, and its Constitution, which was passed in 1992, both Tatar and Russian were declared official languages equal before the law and were to be used in public authorities, local authorities and public institutions (Minnullin et al. 2006: 205).⁴ Different programs and measures, e.g., a Language Program from 2004–2013 (Respublika Tatarstan 2005), were aimed at reaching symmetric Russian-Tatar bilingualism within all parts of the population. The law decreed the teaching of Russian and Tatar in general education schools in equal measure (Respublika Tatarstan 2005: 7–8), as well as the provision of financial means for the realization of the program (Respublika Tatarstan 2005: 18–35).

Discussions about the introduction of a Latin alphabet for Tatar re-arose in the years around the dissolution of the Soviet Union. However, this debate about script systems was nothing new. By the end of the 19th century, script issues were already being debated among Tatar intellectuals as well as among other Turkic-speaking peoples (Baldauf 1993). In the early 1920s, the Tatar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic reformed the Arabic alphabet and established a Latin-based alphabet which was called *Yañalif* [new alphabet].⁵ The *Yañalif*

³ For further consideration of the Tatar efforts to gain autonomy, see Graney (2001) and Derrick (2008, 2010). Additionally, Bowring (2010) describes the Russian constitutional system with regard to the “asymmetrical” relation between the republican and the federal levels and Cashback (2008) analyzes the language policy of the Republic of Tatarstan referring to this aspect.

⁴ The Russian term used in the Constitution (*государственный язык*), as well as the Tatar expression (*дәүләт теле*) include the connotation of state (*государство* in Russian and *дәүләт* in Tatar) (Respublika Tatarstan 1992). To avoid the term “state language” since Tatarstan is not an independent nation-state, the expression “official language” was chosen here.

⁵ The Tatar ASSR was officially created in May 1920 and its borders are identical to that of the Republic of Tatarstan today.

contained 33 letters and a sign and was used from 1927 to 1939. (Alparov et al. 1934: 4)

That script change to a Latin-based alphabet was not unique to Tatarstan, but occurred in most of the non-Russian minority languages and was part of the Soviet policy of *коренизация* [indigenization] of the different ethnic minorities in the Soviet Union. Even then however, a heated discussion arose. There were arguments in favor of the introduction of a Latin script focusing primarily on the internationality and the broad dissemination of this script for numerous languages of the world (Frings 2007: 78–79; Fierman and Garibova 2010: 432). The Latin script was considered a “symbol of modernity, of Europeanisation” (Haarmann 1995: 11), as well as the “alphabet of revolution” (Kreindler 1995: 192), the “alphabet of the Great October” (Fierman and Garibova 2010: 432), and a script change for Russian from the Cyrillic to a Latin alphabet was expected to happen shortly after (Glück 1984: 539; Kreindler 1995: 192).

Another aim of the 1920s alphabet reform was to replace the Arabic script, which was associated with Islam and especially religious texts. Arabic script had been used for the Tatar language for centuries before (Faller 2011: 118–124). Thus, conservative forces among the Tatars, i.e., Qadimists (from the Arabic *qadīm* [old]), “vigorously objected to any attempts at alphabetic reform and the use of Cyrillic or Latin scripts in relation to the Qur’an, Sunnah, or other sacred Islamic texts” (Yemelianova 1997: 560). Qadimists shared this view with a group of modernizers called the Djadidists (from the Arabic *ǧadīd* [new]), who “favored a modernized form of Islam” and suggested several changes for the Arabic script, including additional diacritic marks, the introduction of a so-called “one-form script” with only one sign for each letter (in spite of the different forms in initial, medial and final position) and the “elimination of letters to write borrowed Arabic words which lacked phonemic significance in local languages” (Fierman and Garibova 2010: 431). But despite these objections, the script change took place quickly.

At the All-Union Turkological Congress in Baku in 1926, most of the delegates argued for a change to a Latin-based alphabet. Of the 117 delegates, 101 delegates voted for a corresponding resolution, seven against, and nine abstained (Crisp 1989: 26–27).⁶ While the Tatar administration initially tried to delay the introduction of the Latin alphabet, mainly because they feared to be

⁶ According to Theodor Menzel (1927: 21), a German orientalist and participant of the Congress, the Tatar delegation consisted of 15 persons from Kazan, so at least one person of another delegation must have voted against the resolution or have abstained from voting, respectively. For a detailed account of the discussions about the script issue, as well as a German translation of the adopted resolution in favor of an introduction of a Latin script see Menzel (1927: 173–203).

cut off of what they perceived as a century-old tradition, reactions from Moscow signaled that this was understood as pan-Turkism and therefore as bourgeois nationalism, a dangerous accusation at that time (Frings 2007: 182–187; Garibova 2011: 275). As a consequence of this, the script change was decreed in August 1927 and implemented within a few months.

However, on May 5, 1939, the Supreme Soviet of the Tatar ASSR passed a decree replacing the *Yañalif* with a Cyrillic script based alphabet (TASSR Verhovnyj Sovetj Prezidiumj 1939). This new alphabet consisted of 38 letters, including six which were not part of the Cyrillic script that was used for the Russian language. These six characters – representing three vowels and three consonants – were grouped at the end of the alphabet and expressed sounds specific for Tatar (Wertheim 2012: 71–73). In contrast to the 1920s, the issue at the late 1930s was rarely publicly discussed (Frings 2007: 353) and no official campaign in support of the Cyrillic script was launched as it was 10 years before with the Latin script (Crisp 1989: 28). Therefore, it is more difficult to speculate about the motives for this change and arguments in favor or against it. In general, most researchers assume that one of the main aims was “russifying the non-Russian languages” (Bruchis 1984: 135–136) or “to distance the writing of ‘Soviet’ Turkic languages from Turkish and bring them closer to Russian” (Fierman and Garibova 2010: 432). This is also thought to be the cause for other measures of that time, such as the introduction of compulsory teaching of the Russian language in schools in 1938.

An argument in favor of the script change often expressed by Soviet scholars in later years was that the non-Russian peoples had disadvantages in acquiring the Russian language because they had to learn two different alphabets, i.e., a Latin-based alphabet for their mother tongue as well as the Cyrillic script for Russian. In their opinion, this problem had been solved by the introduction of Cyrillic-based scripts for the non-Russian peoples (Tenishev et al. 1968: 268). Frings (2007: 378–380) criticized these views and spoke of a “self-fulfilling prophecy.” Thus, in an atmosphere of fear and insecurity during and shortly after the Stalinist purges, the Tatar ASSR’s administration decided to change the alphabet for fear of consequences in case that change came too late. Moscow saw no reason for forbidding this step, which was, in turn, an affirmation for the republic’s administration (Frings 2007: 396).

During the rest of the Soviet era, the use of a Cyrillic alphabet for the Tatar language remained unchanged. It was only in 1997 that a law concerning the rearrangement of the Cyrillic letters used for Tatar was adopted. With this law, those six specific signs which were used for Tatar sounds were rearranged to stand next to those signs from which they were derived or to which they were most similar (Minnullin et al. 2006: 216–218). However, in that same year, at

the second World Congress of Tatars in Kazan, the deputies passed a resolution demanding the transition to a Latin script. This resolution was quickly moved to the political arena and on September 15, 1999, the parliament of the Republic of Tatarstan adopted the law “On the restoration of the Tatar language based on the Latin alphabet” (Minnullin et al. 2006). This *восстановление* [restoration] was “meant to link Tatarstan’s 1999 law with the period from 1927 to 1939 when Tatar was based on a Latin script” (Cashaback 2008: 265).

However, it was not the original *Yaḡalif* which was reinstated but rather an alphabet with partly new elements which consisted of 34 letters, some of which were provided for Tatar-specific sounds. While a couple of the special characters were already in use in the *Yaḡalif*, a few were borrowed from other Latin-based Turkic language scripts, e.g., the Turkish language alphabet. To reference the historical link, this alphabet was called *Yaḡalif-2* at times (Khisamova 2004; Sokolovskii 2007: 14).

In contrast to the previous script changes which took place with almost no preparation and were implemented within a very short period of time, this transition was to happen during the course of 10 years. The law would go into force on September 1, 2001 but until September 1, 2011 both the Cyrillic and the Latin alphabets would be used in parallel. A special program for the introduction of the Latin script was to be prepared by Tatarstan’s administration by March 1, 2001 (Minnullin et al. 2006: 218–220). The law was adopted by the parliament of the Republic of Tatarstan and was valid for the Tatar language within the borders of the Republic of Tatarstan.

The enthusiasm for the new script was reflected in the appearance of Tatar words written in the Latin alphabet in public places during those years. One can still find several street signs or name plates on different types of institutional buildings in Kazan today. Examples of this type of sign can be found at the National Library (Figure 9.1) and another at the Kazan Kremlin (Figure 9.2).

As seen in Figures 9.1 and 9.2, besides the English and the Russian texts, one can see the Tatar expression, *bötenönya mirasi* [World Heritage] in Latin script at the top of the sign.

In contrast to the enthusiasm in large parts of the Tatar community in Tatarstan, the adoption of the law provoked strong resistance in Moscow as well as within other parts of the Russian Federation. Soon afterwards, a broader debate began in which both journalists and politicians accused Tatarstan of “a kind of treachery” (Cashaback 2008: 267; Garipov and Faller 2003: 180; Sebba 2006: 107). The measure was seen as an attempt to separate Tatarstan from the rest of the Russian Federation, as well as a potential threat to the unity of the Tatar nation. In 2002, the Russian Duma adopted an amendment to Article 3 §5



Figure 9.1: Sign at the National Library of the Republic of Tatarstan, Kazan

of the Federation's Language Law, which stated that the Federation's state language, i.e., Russian, as well as the republics' official languages had to be written in an alphabet based on the Cyrillic script (Minnullin et al. 2006: 74–75). A group of State Duma deputies under the leadership of Kaadyr-ool Bicheldei from Tuva, the Deputy Head of the Committee on Nationalities Affairs, supported the bill, arguing that “script reform posed a threat to Russia's integrity and consequently the federal government needed to act to prevent republics from falling into the sphere of influence of foreign states” (Cashaback 2008: 266–267). The amendment was accepted by both houses of the parliament in November 2002 (Sebba 2006: 108) and signed into law by President Putin a month later (Cashaback 2008: 267).

cannot be an area of exclusive republican competence” (Cashaback 2008: 269). Therefore, the Constitutional Court’s conclusion was that the decision about which alphabet should be used for Tatar (and other official languages within the Russian Federation) was a federal issue.

Approximately 10 years have passed since the ruling and the decision appears to be final and accepted by the government of the Republic of Tatarstan. In the law “On the use of the Tatar language as official language of the Republic of Tatarstan,” which was adopted in January 2013, the use of the Cyrillic script for Tatar on the basis of the federal law is specified in Article 3 (Respublika Tatarstan 2013). Nevertheless, the issue remains an emotional and controversial one as seen later in this chapter.

3 Theoretical framework: Language and nation, language policy and nation-building

Language and language planning often plays an important role in nation-building processes. In the Soviet Union, language planning was an integral part of Soviet nationality policies and was extended to the languages of all peoples living in the state. For Soviet language planners, language was “the most prominent factor for the definition of nationality” (Haarmann 2006: 2414). *Natsional’nost’* [nationality] referred more broadly to individual ethnic groups. As Haarmann (2006: 2414) stresses, the Soviet view of language as a key element “not only reflected the typical European tradition of the nineteenth century, it was also in accordance with the reality of self-awareness among most of the speech communities in the Soviet Union”. This view remains prevalent, even though the members of different speech communities may no longer be fluent in the language which they and others regard as their mother tongue (i.e., the titular language of their ethnic group).

Nevertheless, it is necessary to differentiate between two types of “nation,” both of which should be considered an “imagined” group, as Anderson (1998: 6–7) put it. On one hand, a “nation” can be a group based on the idea of an “ethnos”, i.e., a number of people with certain common characteristics. Ethnic identity here means the identification (or self-identification) of a person as a member of a certain ethnic group, or, as in the case which is considered in this chapter, mainly as “Tatar” or “Russian”. Edwards (2009: 162) defines ethnic identity as an

... allegiance to a group – large or small, socially dominant or subordinate – with which one has ancestral links. There is no necessity for a continuation, over generations, of the same socialisation or cultural patterns, but some sense of a group boundary must persist. This can be sustained by shared objective characteristics (language, religion, etc.), or by more subjective contributions to a sense of “groupness”, or by some combination of both. Symbolic or subjective attachments must relate, at however distant a remove, to an observably real past.

On the other hand, a nation can be seen as a group of people belonging to a certain state, i.e., a civic nation. The civic model of the nation is, according to Smith (1991: 9), “in the first place, a predominantly spatial or territorial conception.” Smith (1991: 14) continues, stating that “A nation can therefore be defined as *a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members*” [italics in original]. In the case of Tatarstan, this can be the identification with the Russian Federation (i.e., Russian in the sense of the Russian word *россия́нский*), or, respectively, with the Republic of Tatarstan, i.e., a Tatarstani identity (Bartholomä 2010: 171–172).

In this broader framework, language can be, but is not necessarily an important element in the (self-) definition of a nation, as Fishman (2007: 330) argues, writing

However, just as ethnicity itself is perspectival and situational, and therefore variable in saliency, so the link between language and ethnicity is also variable. For some (and in some historical and situational contexts) language is the primary indicator and expression of their own and another’s ethnicity; for others, language is both merely marginal and optional (i.e., detachable) vis-à-vis their ethnicity (and that of “others” as well).

Thus, language can be (but is not necessarily) used not only as a marker for the own group, but, as Fishman points out, for defining the ethnicity of others. Therefore, here it is crucial to show “both that *they* are different from *us* and that *we* are different from *them*” (Tabouret-Keller 2007: 316; italics in original). In this way, language plays a key role as element of distancing from “others” as well as a factor for defining and limiting the own group.

For Tatarstan, language has been seen as an important marker for the titular nation in the definition of the own group, especially in contrast to the dominant Russian element. In an ethnosociological research study, of those Tatars who answered the question, “What binds you to people of your nationality?” the majority (over 70%) “consider[ed] language the principal feature of an ethnic group” (Musina 2004: 82). Even though sociolinguistic studies showed a decreasing proficiency in Tatar as well as diminishing areas in which the language is

functional among Tatars (Musina 2004: 83–84), it is still seen by an overwhelming majority to be the mother tongue, irrespective of the actual knowledge or use of the language. In the 2010 Russian census, 92.4% of the Tatars in the Republic of Tatarstan stated that Tatar was their mother tongue, while only 5.7% named Russian (Federal'naia sluzhba gosudarstvennoi statistiki 2010).⁷ By claiming Tatar to be one's mother tongue, this person differentiates himself from the "other" group. Another attempt to create a distance from the Russian element was often seen in the efforts to introduce the Latin script for Tatar in the late 1990s, as the Cyrillic script was frequently equalized with "Russian".

4 Methodology

After situating the language debate in its historical context, the rest of this chapter focuses on analyzing the script change debate vis-à-vis qualitative discourse analysis of statements from various sources. This chapter is the result of a research project that was more broadly aimed at analyzing constructions of identity in debates about language policy by comparing developments in the Republic of Tatarstan (Russian Federation) and the Republic of Kazakhstan.⁸ Although the Russian Federation's Constitutional Court ruling in 2004 seemed to be the end of the matter and the issue did not attract special attention over the past years, we addressed the issue in interviews which were conducted for the project. We did so in order to see how the former events and reactions are being perceived after several years, and the respondents commented on it in an interesting and clear way.

Statements were extracted from different texts as well as comments which were expressed in sociolinguistic interviews. For this chapter, excerpts from

⁷ This result may have been affected by the fact that only one language can be named as mother tongue. Already in 1991, a sociolinguistic investigation showed differing results: In this investigation, it was explained that mother tongue and ethnic belonging did not necessarily have to coincide. When given the possibility to name both Tatar and Russian as mother tongue, 6.8% of the Tatars named Russian as their mother tongue, 66.5% Tatar and 26.1% Tatar and Russian equally (as cited in Rom-Sourkova 2004: 206–207).

⁸ The findings in this chapter were part of an interdisciplinary project that was conducted at the Institute of Slavic Studies (project leader: Prof. Dr. Monika Wingender; assistant: Dipl.-Phil. Aksana Braun) and the Professorship of Turkology (project leader: Prof. Dr. Mark Kirchner; assistant: Dr. Ruth Bartholomä). Within the project, the regions of Kazakhstan and Tatarstan were taken into account from a Slavistic as well as from a Turkological point of view. For more information in German, see https://www.uni-giessen.de/cms/fbz/fb04/institute/turkologie/abgeschlossene%20projekte_n/russ-turk-sprachgem.

official documents, statements from newspaper and magazine articles and open letters, which revolved around script choice in Tatarstan and were published in the late 1990s and early 2000s, were considered. The individuals who engaged in public debate about the script change were either public figures or journalists.

Out of the sociolinguistic interviews which were taken during two fieldtrips to Kazan in September 2010 and in April/May 2011, statements from three interviews with four respondents were considered for this chapter.⁹ The interviewees were persons working in the Republic of Tatarstan's Ministry of Education, in the Kazan municipal education department, and a journalist. They were chosen because they all were not only affected by the official language policy as individuals, but had to take certain decisions in their work regarding language which have the potential to influence other people and/or the discourse on language as well (i.e., are disseminators). To maintain participant anonymity, they are identified simply by their nationality, birth year, and gender. By analyzing these different sources, different perspectives were taken into consideration. The politicians and journalists who contributed to the debate and, respectively, the interviewees articulated statements which reflected their perceptions of their own group, as well as their idea of how language (and script as a part of it) could contribute to, or detract from, the building of a Tatar nation. Thus, this provided insight into how the language-nation-state relationship was publicly being constructed and conceptualized by these different actors.

Discourse in this chapter is generally situated with a Foucaultian perspective. Jung (1996: 463) defined "discourse" as "*Gesamtheit der Beziehungen zwischen thematisch verknüpften Aussagekomplexen* [the entity of relations between thematically associated statements]." Furthermore, according to Jung (1996: 461), a "statement" is "*eine bestimmte thematisch definierte Behauptung* [a certain, thematically defined proposition]." A "text" contains statements that relate to different discourses (Jung 2000: 25). In this chapter, texts include not only written but also verbal statements.¹⁰

⁹ In total, 43 semi-structured interviews with 56 interviewees were conducted in Kazan during these two fieldtrips. Not all participants gave their opinion about the introduction of a Latin script for Tatar, and some confined themselves to short statements with a mere reproduction of facts. The project interviews for Kazakhstan (Almaty and Astana) took place in March 2011. These interviews, not considered for this chapter, were semi-structured as well and based on a similar questionnaire, with only some questions slightly modified to be in line with some specific conditions in Kazakhstan, different from Tatarstan (laws, certain formulations in language programs, etc.).

¹⁰ In this project, text was defined broadly, i.e., "[b]asically, we thus subsume all communicates (notwithstanding the modality or mediality) as *texts*, if they are perceived as being concluded and autonomous to a significant degree" (Spitzmüller and Warnke 2011b: 91; italics in original).

An analytical framework based on the DIMEAN-model by Jürgen Spitzmüller and Ingo Warnke (Spitzmüller and Warnke 2011a, 2011b) is used in this chapter for analysis. DIMEAN is an acronym for *Diskurslinguistische Mehrebenen-Analyse* [Discourse-Linguistic Multilayered Analysis]. Within the DIMEAN-model, a distinction is drawn between three different basic layers (Spitzmüller and Warnke 2011b: 81–82). Besides the “intratextual layer”¹¹ and the “agent layer”,¹² the “transtextual layer (knowledge)” represents the “actual goal of discourse analysis” (Spitzmüller and Warnke 2011b: 86) and is the result of “a research for *patterns* that emerge from multiple texts” (i.e., “*recurrent* phenomena) (Spitzmüller and Warnke 2011b: 86–87; italics in original). In this chapter, the main focus of analysis is the transtextual layer; thus the discussion focuses on specific discourse patterns, e.g., the use or avoidance of personal pronouns and certain keywords in order to reach certain goals, as well as repeating argumentations within the discourse.

5 The script change debate: Nation-building within arguments for and against a Latin alphabet

As aforementioned, earlier discussions about the introduction of a Latin script for Tatar was a controversial issue and led to heated debates. Several types of arguments reoccurred during the conflict, both in favor of and against a change of the script system for Tatar. Although they cannot be treated in detail here, due to space limitations, the most important will be examined briefly.

Some of the reasons that were articulated in favor of the script change included:

¹¹ The intratextual layer (texts) is the starting point and aims at investigating “concrete manifestations... discursively contextualised linguistic practices” (Spitzmüller and Warnke 2011b: 82). In this project, this is done by an investigation on the word, proposition and text level.

¹² The agent layer (actors) is “deliberately positioned between text and discourse” in the scheme provided by the authors, as the actors “can be regarded as ‘mediators’ between intra- and the transtextual strata” (Spitzmüller and Warnke 2011b: 85). Or, as the authors put it, “the discursive practices (and hence the texts) are on the one hand shaped by the discursive dispositions, but on the other hand, the discourse itself is also influenced by the practices of the actors” (Spitzmüller and Warnke 2011b: 85).

- History, i.e., the fact that Tatar was written in a Latin script in the late 1920s and 1930s.
- Philology, i.e., the belief that a Latin script was more suitable to express specific Tatar sounds than the Cyrillic alphabet that was currently in use.
- Associations of “modernity”, i.e., the perception of Latin alphabets as progressive scripts, amongst other reasons due to the association with computers and the internet and terms like “globalization”.

In contrast, the opponents of a script change often referred to the following arguments:

- Cultural, i.e., the fear of losing large parts of the cultural heritage.
- Economic, i.e., the financial costs and the expenditure of time which would incur in the event of a script change.
- Habitual, i.e., the fact that, after decades of using the Cyrillic script, a readjustment would be difficult.¹³

Hereon after, the focus in the following sections is the question of how various discussants constructed their idea of a “Tatar nation” (i.e., how they debated issues connected with questions of nation-building). Did they see the process of drawing a border to the Russian element as a necessary prerequisite of building a Tatar nation? Should the Tatar nation be built by distancing itself from “the other” or was this something considered unimportant in the debate? And whom did those who took part in the discussion include in their concept of a Tatar nation, and how did they discuss the fact that bigger parts of the Tatar community do not live within the borders of the Republic of Tatarstan but in other parts of the Russian Federation? How did this group take part in the debate?

5.1 Dissociation from “the other”

As mentioned earlier, in the process of creating an increased awareness for the own group, distancing from “the other” is an important element. This can also be observed in the discourse about the introduction of a Latin script in Tatarstan which is seen as a step of distancing from “the Russian.” However, it was interesting to see that this distancing approach was used more frequently by the Russian side to prevent alphabet change rather than on the Tatar side.

¹³ As mentioned before, these arguments cannot be considered here (Khasanova 1997; Sebba 2006: 109–116).

Opponents of a script change claim that the change was intended as a sign of separatism, while supporters of the Latin script sometimes mention the necessity of drawing a boundary towards the dominating Russian element.

At the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, there was a growing awareness among the Tatars about their own culture and traditions. This resulted in the desire to distance themselves from the Soviet legacy and the idea of a homogenous Soviet people that had developed in the 1930s. Through a convergence (*сближение*) of all the Soviet peoples and their cultures, a fusion (*слияние*) would be reached so that nationality, language, etc. would not continue to play a major role (Grenoble 2003: 42). This international proletarian class identity “would transcend national, ethnic, linguistic, and other boundaries” and seems at first sight a paradox to the politics of *коренизация* (“indigenization”, i.e., the building of nations and languages in the 1920s). However, “according to the Bolshevik version of Marxist ideology, history was to progress in stages, and nations had to be created before proceeding to the stage of history where an ‘international proletarian’ identity would unite the entire world” (Fierman and Garibova 2010: 427). A shift came in the mid-1930s, when “the Soviet international identity promoted by the USSR’s leaders became filled with a Russian component” (Fierman and Garibova 2010: 428).

Despite the fact that a dominant position for the Russian language was not planned in the Soviet Union, as was mentioned explicitly at times, Russian played a key role in practice, especially after Khrushchev’s educational-reform laws of 1958/1959 (Kreindler 1982: 13). Therefore, as Faller (2011: 110) observes “for Tatars and other non-Russians, attitudes about orthography [in the 20th century] have served as significant indicators of integration into and disaggregation from the Russian-run state, while Russians’ attitudes towards different alphabets indicate fluctuations in the strength of collective xenophobia.” This tendency of drawing up frontiers was an important motive for the introduction of a Latin script in post-Soviet times, not only in Tatarstan but in several successor states as well. Fierman and Garibova (2010: 447) posited that it as an anti-Russian sentiment that informed or was “undoubtedly part of the reason for the eagerness to adopt Latin letters.” The motive could be found in several statements in the debate that took place in Tatarstan in the end of the 1990s and the early 2000s. Nevertheless, it seems that it is more often perceived by the opponents of a script change outside the borders of the Republic of Tatarstan than it was explicitly mentioned by the supporters of such a step within the republic.

One example for this tendency to see the introduction of a Latin script as a step towards creating a distance to the Russian element is found in an article quoting Vladimir Alpatov, the Director of the Institute of Linguistics of the

Russian Academy of Sciences. Alpatov stated that “[. . .] the question of a script change is advantageous for those who wish ‘to alienate Tatarstan from Russia’” (“*Перевод письменности*” 2001). Sycheva (2001), a well-known writer and journalist living in Moscow, also criticized the intended script change in Tatarstan. Sycheva cited two letters to the editor of the newspaper *Вечерняя Казань* [Evening Kazan] in which such this attitude becomes clear,

The readers of the newspaper *Вечерняя Казань*, the only sharp-tongued mass media, were at a loss: Why, if the authorities are on fire for the national rebirth in such a way, should one not return to the Arabic alphabet, after all, the Tatars used it for a whole millennium, and the Koran, as is known, is created in Arabic. Gul'nara Kalganova writes: “The motives of a change to the Latin script today do not only lie in the correctness of pronunciation, but it is more a political step, the wish to separate from Russia”.¹⁴ Another reader, L. Urasin, adds: “It is not necessary to change the Cyrillic script for a Latin one because Latin is more suitable. The whole trouble is that the Russians use the Cyrillic script. It's their language. If the Turks used the Cyrillic script and Russia was Latinized, no problems would emerge. We would thank Allah that he gave us the Cyrillic script.”¹⁵

In contrast, supporters of a change to the Latin script saw this step as an instrument to impede assimilation to the Russian culture among Tatars. Sokolovskii (2007: 34) cited an interview with Damir Iskhakov, a thought-leader regarding Tatar cultural revitalization. The correspondent of the Tatar newspaper *Восточный экспресс* [Orient Express] asked Iskhakov, “Is not the Latin script to which we are switching also surely a powerful factor impeding assimilation?” Iskhakov answered, “I think that Latin script raises the status of the Tatars as a national group. It ‘marks’ them as a part of the developed Western world. And this too may slow down assimilatory processes” (cited in Sokolovskii 2007: 22). By mentioning the “developed Western world”, Iskhakov puts the Latin script in a broader context and implicitly mentions the distance which a script change could create, i.e., more Western and less Russian.

Though clearly prominent in the discourse in the beginning of the 2000s, in our interviews which were conducted between 2010 and 2011, discursal distancing from the Russian element was rarely mentioned by both sides of the debate. Only one interviewee mentioned this and this example is more the reproduction of an (maybe even unjustified) accusation of those who were opposing a script change for Tatar, but not the expressed of the wish of the interviewee herself, a

¹⁴ Kalganova is a lecturer at Kazan Federal University who wrote her dissertation about the functioning of the Tatar language in the sphere of business (<http://kpfu.ru/Gulnara.Kalganova>) (accessed 05/11/2014).

¹⁵ Quotes from newspaper articles and official documents as well as statements from the interviews have been translated from the original Russian.

young journalist. She purported that "... there was, of course, I think, some political attempt, nevertheless, to get rid of the Russian language, to get rid of the Russian culture, well, that is why they stopped, I think, they saw in it a political underlying reason" (personal communication, Tatar, *1976, female). While she speculates that there was some political motivation, from her comment it is unclear whether there really was a reason for being suspicious of the Russian element.

In other interviews this motive was not expressed at all. The reason for not mentioning the wish to create a distance to the Russian element might be in a changed reality today, i.e., the altered relation between Kazan and Moscow. Tatarstan is closer connected with the Russian Federation than was the case in the 1990s. Soon after the breakup of the Soviet Union, as Derrick (2010: 356–357) pointed out, "Tatarstan operated largely independently of Moscow... redeveloping a Tatar culture influenced by centuries of Russification", while "large anti-Muscovite demonstrations were common." However, in the years following Vladimir Putin's rise to power as president of the Russian Federation in 2000 (and despite his politics of recentralization of the Russian Federation) "no significant protests have taken place in the republic since Putin assumed power; and Kazan's political elite, including a president who once brazenly defied Moscow, has not attempted to mobilize its citizenry against the center" (Derrick 2010: 357). After the ruling of the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation in 2002, no wider protests took place. This change in the relation between the local and federal level, as well as the *de facto* dominance of the Russian element which is still prevalent in Tatarstan in many fields today, may contribute to the fact that distancing seems to be an option not realizable and therefore is mentioned more rarely.

5.2 One script for one Tatar nation? Attitudes inside and outside of Tatarstan

Another aspect of Tatar nation-building which was often connected to the issue of the introduction of a Latin script for Tatar arose from the fact that, as mentioned earlier, only one third of ethnic Tatars in the Russian Federation live within the borders of the Republic of Tatarstan, while about two thirds reside in other units of the Federation. This caused problems regarding the question for whom the script change was planned and whom it would concern in practice. It soon became clear that the question could be extended to questions such as: who had the power to plan such a script change and, when talking about the "right of the Tatar nation to decide this issue," who defined the boundaries of this Tatar nation and how?

In the early 2000s, Tatars from other parts of the Russian Federation weighed on the debate, but they were often accused of being manipulated and used by federal authorities. Nevertheless, as Derrick (2010: 369) observed “Although it appears Moscow used the Tatar diaspora to inflame controversy, many Tatars living beyond the borders of Tatarstan indeed are anxious about being cut off from their contemporary national culture.”

Despite this, Tatars of the Republic of Tatarstan took the leading role or, as Musina (2004: 77) puts it, “represent[ed] the principal focus of the *natsiia* [the Tatar nation].” This was due to the fact that the leadership of Tatarstan, to a certain degree, had the possibility to enact laws or decrees through which it could influence the language situation. According to Musina (2004: 77), “to a large degree, ethnosocial processes among Tatars within the republic determine the level, direction, and rates of development of the entire Tatar people.” The Tatar authorities tried to include those Tatars who live outside the borders of Tatarstan by including a “Tatar language beyond the borders” component in its measures, e.g. the Language Program for the Years 2004–2013 (Respublika Tatarstan 2005: 21) explicitly mentioned both Tatar language use in Tatarstan and outside its borders.

In this debate, the issue of the Tatars living outside the borders of the Republic of Tatarstan led to heated discussions and provided a pretext for 10 deputies of the Russian parliament who opposed the script changed to place a draft which led to the adoption of an amendment to Art. 3, § 5 of the Federation’s Language Law in 2002 (cf. Section 2) before the State Duma. Sokolovskii (2007: 18) describes the reason which led to the draft as follows:

In the opinion of the draft law’s authors, the arbitrary switching of the language of a titular people from one alphabet to another – by decision of the leadership of one constituent republic – violates the rights of representatives of this ethnic group who live outside “their” republic. “If we all – each of Rossiia’s peoples – return to our old script,” Deputy Bicheldei [deputy from the Republic of Tuva, RB] argued in justification of the necessity of the draft law, “then we shall destroy the unity of our peoples, the country’s single educational space. And that is already a political question, a question of preserving Rossiia’s integrity.”

One example for the fierce debate is the September 14, 2001 open letter in the *Российская газета* [Russian Gazette] addressed to the Deputies of the Republic of Tatarstan (Khaibullov et al. 2001) and signed by Tatar intellectuals living throughout the Russian Federation, but outside the Republic of Tatarstan. With this letter, the signees militated against the change to a Latin alphabet for the Tatar language. The letter was debated controversially in the next months. It

was reprinted by several newspapers released in the Republic of Tatarstan, mostly accompanied by comments containing strong criticism.

The language used in this letter is interesting. In almost every sentence, the authors use personal and possessive pronouns, such as *мы* [we] and *наш* [our]. The Russian adjective *родной*, was translated, depending on the context, as “native,” “home,” or, respectively, “our,” or “our own” and was used quite often in connection with phrases like *татарский язык* [Tatar language], *культура* [culture] and *земля* [soil]. In addition, *историческая родина* [historical homeland] was also mentioned twice and lexical phrases denominating some kind of family relationship were used. On one hand, this is meant to address the readers of the letter in an emotional way. For example, in an appeal at the end of the letter, implored “With hope and optimism we appeal to you, dear ladies and gentlemen deputies, compatriots! Let us develop, and not destroy, improve, but not reshape our native Tatar language! Let us do it in such a way that our children understand what their fathers and mothers speak and write about!” (Khaibullov et al. 2001).

On the other hand, these kinds of phrases are used to express the authors’ belonging to the Tatar nation in rather abstract contexts, and do not express real family affiliations. Thus, the authors used phrases like *мы, дети татарского народа* [“we, the children of the Tatar nation”] or *наша святая задача, как сынов и дочерей татарского народа* [“our holy duty, as sons and daughters of the Tatar nation”]. In this way, they also tried to evoke a sense of togetherness in the “other Tatars,” the ones living within the boundaries of the Republic. The description of what exactly the “holy duty” consisted of could be understood as expressed here “Wherever we live, our holy duty, as sons and daughters of the Tatar nation, is to be united and to be spiritually indivisible in the name of the preservation of the nation, its integrity, in the name of the prosperity of the native culture!” (Khaibullov et al. 2001).

On the other hand, in official documents released by the Republic of Tatarstan, the issue of Tatars living inside and outside the borders of Tatarstan was handled with care and often not mentioned explicitly. One example is an appeal by the parliament of the Republic of Tatarstan, which was written in November 2002 (Gosudarstvennyi Sovet RT 2002) and contained a petition to suspend the changing of the federal Law on Languages. The argumentation is nearly exclusively based on the legislature, i.e., the signees argued that language policy was the responsibility of the republics, that the addition of the new paragraph to the federal law “contradicts the Constitution of the Russian Federation” and that it is also incompatible with international legal acts. The appeal was written in using an objective voice, without any emotional reference to persons. In the

entire document, not one reason for the introduction of a Latin alphabet for the Tatar language was mentioned. The authors' arguments were legislative. The issue of the Tatar population living outside the republic was also not mentioned. A reason for that may be the fact that the officials wanted to avoid accusations of separatism and causing ethnic tensions.

However, in our interviews, the issue of Tatars living outside the republic did emerge periodically. The first comment, made by a staff member of the Kazan municipality education department, explained why, apart from other reasons, the introduction of a Latin alphabet would be difficult. The public official stated that "All the more as there are many Tatars in other regions as well, not only in Tatarstan. Even more than there are Tatars in Tatarstan – statistically only 30%. Only 30% of the Tatars [live] in Tatarstan" (personal communication, Tatar, *1964, male; Tatar, *1979, male).

Another comment, made by a person working in the Department of Education of the Republic of Tatarstan, also pointed to the fact that there are many Tatars living outside the republic's territory:

The reason why a Latin alphabet was of current importance and likely will be is that Tatars do live not only in Tatarstan. And very many Tatars who... and many, more than in our republic, live not only in the regions [i.e., of the Russian Federation], but abroad. And these Tatars don't have any other possibility to learn the language and communicate, than by the way of a Latin alphabet. That is, in this context, the Latin alphabet is used anyway. This approach which was suggested is another, they clearly do not learn the [Cyrillic] script and those tools which are accessible for them electronically, they do not allow, well, the use of the Cyrillic script, and they do not have a special necessity and this is a big problem for them. [...] That is, we give them our textbooks, and they cannot use them [to learn Tatar]. They would need [material] not in an [unfamiliar] language, but in Tatar language, but in a way that it is written in a [familiar] script. That is, so that they understand it and can learn in a familiar script. (personal communication, Tatar, *1952, male)¹⁶

This interviewee referred to a point which was often downplayed or overlooked by highlighting the fact that more Tatars live abroad (i.e., outside the Russian Federation) than live in Tatarstan. It is estimated that the number of Tatars all over the world is about eight million (Zakiev 2002: 354). According to the 2010 Russian Census, about 5.3 million of them live within the Russian Federation and of those, slightly more than two million live in the Republic of Tatarstan. This indicates that about 2.7 million Tatars live abroad in other FSU

¹⁶ The interviewee did not express his thoughts coherently and so, certain words were added in square brackets.

countries,¹⁷ Europe, US, or Australia.¹⁸ The question remains: do all these people with Tatar origin living abroad, especially those living in great distance to the Republic of Tatarstan, still regard the Tatar language as an important part of their identity and are willing to improve Tatar or maybe acquire it?

However, during the course of the interview, this interviewee changed his mind and added, thinking about the consequences such a step would have for the Tatars living outside the republic, but within the Russian Federation, by saying “And then, we do prepare textbooks, tutorials for children in Tatar schools in the regions of the Russian Federation. If we introduced a Latin alphabet, there would be absolutely no textbooks for them” (personal communication, Tatar, *1952, male).

A larger concern, namely that the introduction of a Latin script would inflict damage on the unity of the Tatars, was also expressed by President Shaimiev when he addressed the participants of the third World Congress of Tatars. He posed the following question,

During the last Congress [the second World Congress of Tatars in 1997, RB] we made the decision to convert the Tatar language to a Latin script. The law on the restoration of the Latin alphabet for the Tatar language has not been canceled. Nevertheless, I myself have some doubts concerning the timing of the conversion, and this is connected with the preservation of the unity of our nation. [...] It could happen that Tatarstan shifts to a Latin script, but in the remaining territory of Russia, the Tatars will use a Cyrillic script. Doesn't that weaken our nation? (*“Выступление Президента”* 2002)

In the end, the issue played a great role in the discourse on the introduction of a Latin script for Tatar. The fact that a larger population of Tatars lives outside

17 Zakiev (2002: 354) explicitly named Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, the Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. In this context, it is important to keep in mind that amongst the countries of the former Soviet Union, only a few have changed their script to a Latin alphabet, so that Tatars living in these other countries (e.g., Kazakhstan, Ukraine, etc.) are used to the Cyrillic script as the alphabet of the official language of the respective country (and Russian as an important language as well) just like it is the case in the Russian Federation.

18 Unfortunately, no data with the exact number of Tatars in the respective countries outside the former Soviet Union were available. Baskakov (2000: 455) gave a number of Tatars in the countries of the former Soviet Union as 42, 845, but did not have any data about Tatars living in other countries of the world, e.g., in Europe or Australia. According to the numbers given in Table III on a Tatar website (http://web.archive.org/web/20121318563800/http://www.kcn.ru/tat_en/politics/dfa/diaspor/diaspor.htm, accessed 05/11/2014), those numbers could in actuality be much lower. Furthermore, it is doubtful whether or not the knowledge of Tatar among the members of the Tatar diaspora is widespread; but certainly, the assumption is correct that they do not know the Cyrillic script, but the Latin letters. Those are in most cases used for the official language of the country they live in, but in some cases also for the writing of Tatar (Sebba 2006: 106).

of Tatarstan further problematizes the process of building a Tatar nation and is often used as an argument by opponents of the Latin script, especially by those expressing their concerns about the “unity of the Russian Federation” or the like. Nevertheless, supporters of the Latin alphabet keep this in mind as well when talking about their anxiety for the “unity of the Tatar nation” which, in their opinion, should be one inseparable entity.

6 Concluding thoughts

In this chapter, two elements of nation-building were considered. It turned out that the motives of “creating a distance” and “unity of the nation” have shifted over time. While the reality of the Tatar diaspora within and outside of the Russian Federation is still considered important and discussed, discursive distancing of the Tatar nation from the Russian element seems to be less important than in the past. As previously mentioned, this is probably to a certain degree due to the fact that Tatarstan as part of the Russian Federation felt increasing pressure from the federal government which got stronger over the last few years, but did not cause serious resistance, even after the ruling that forbade the introduction of the Latin script. Derrick (2010: 369) explains the “mild response” with the “disconnect between Tatar state and Tatar nation”; another aspect is the fact that every citizen of Tatarstan is automatically a citizen of the Russian Federation as well and thus has a “Russian” (in the sense of the Russian *российский*) identity. This could be another reason why the issue of distancing from the Russian element is not that easy as it might have been at the beginning of the 1990s when the degree of autonomy and sovereignty for Tatarstan was considerably higher than it is today.

Concerning the introduction of a Latin script, the change of the relevant federal law in 2002 was a clear signal that the Russian Federation would not allow its subjects a grade of autonomy which was considered as a threat for the unity of the state. One interesting aspect that could not be touched in this chapter due to limitations of space is the fear which opponents of a script change often mentioned, namely the fear of some kind of influence from Turkey. To whatever extent this threat might be real or not, is not easy to evaluate. Unseth (2008: 1) sees “a language community’s choice of script as a decision about how to visually represent their language, to represent their identity”. In the case of Tatarstan, this choice was restricted from federal authorities. Nevertheless, debating about a script change might already be a good option to create some kind of consciousness for the own group and for the necessity of differentiating from “the other”; something that was and still is an important issue in

the nation-building processes in post-Soviet regions where people are in search of their nation's identity. A comparison of similar debates and processes in different communities can provide interesting insights, as well as a closer look at opinions expressed by ethnic Tatars from outside the Republic of Tatarstan could give a hint about the significance the issues language and nation-building have in Tatar communities.

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