Sociolinguistic description of the German dialect of Siberia according to metalanguage reflection of its speakers

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Abstract. Offered article shows results of field expeditions realized within the territory of Tomsk region and aimed to research of metalanguage consciousness of the Russian Germans. In research the multimethodological principle of modern linguistics is being developed: by means of a combination the qualitative and quantitative methods of field collecting of material is considered an ordinary metalanguage reflection of informants as a source for primary sociolinguistic parametrisation of "small" language. An article will be interesting to representatives of such linguistic disciplines as field, "naive" linguistics, dialectology and ecolinguistics.

Introduction

According to an overview of modern publications and research projects on dialectology it should be noted, that in the recent decades under the influence of the development of empirical sociology, psychology and pragmatic branch of linguistics this linguistic branch started to change. It is characterized by the active usage of the tools of corpus linguistics, the interdisciplinary nature of research, giving the objects of scientific description the status of open, heterogeneous, unstable idioms, reviewing the role of contact and majority languages, the study of phenomena typical for microlevels of described language community [1].

Along with marked processes in modern dialectology the rapid growth of interest to the everyday interpretation of linguistic reality is also noted. The question "What does the dialect speaker think about the language/ languages?" is affected/ developed by the modern dialectologists on the material of oral variants of German [2], French [3], Spanish [4], Italian [5], Japanese [6], Turkish [7] and other languages. Research projects devoted to the mentioned subject, usually refer to the so-called perceptual dialectology.

Literature review allows us to identify a range of scientific problems, and at their research the efforts of the representatives of the perceptual dialectology are directed.

Firstly, study of mental maps of native speakers. Through the method of cognitive mapping (respondents are offered to indicate on a map the habitat of some dialects) scientists get an access to human knowledge of the interrelationship between language and space [8].

Secondly, study of salience of the dialectal characteristics that means detection, usually by special experiments (for example, matched-guise method), relevant and irrelevant for the native speakers phenomena of dialects [9].

Thirdly, the entire associative potential in relation to the dialects is studied, i.e. these are installations, characterization of dialects determined by linguistic and extra-linguistic reasons. For example, by statistical methods following information is summarized: which dialects in the ordinary metalanguage consciousness represented as "good" and "bad", "beautiful" and "ugly", what people think about the need to save them, what kind of emotions they feel towards their speakers, etc. [10].

The task of the proposed project is to try to look at traditional dialectology objects from a new perspective, and to expand its range of methods and data sources. However, the statements of informants about the language in the "traditional" dialectology have been regarded for a long time as "subjective" and were not taken into consideration when dealing with certain research tasks [11, 12]. Despite the urgency of the mentioned issue, to date, only few scientists in their works touched on the issue of usage of ordinary metalanguage representations as an additional data source (link). To fill in this gap of the modern dialectology and field linguistics the research is aimed. Its certain results are represented in the offered article.

Material sources and research methods

Nowadays, about 400,000 Germans live in Russia (census 2010), most of them inhabit its Siberian region. In Tomsk region located in Western Siberia, the Germans are the fourth most populous (after the Russians, the Tatar and the Ukrains). Total

in Tomsk region live 8 687 Germans according to the 2010 Census.

Ten-year experience of field study of German dialects in Tomsk region by the authors of proposed article showed that expeditionary team members may encounter the following difficulties: limited time of the expedition, lack of transport to move around the locality, the reluctance of informants to make contact with strangers, no informants at home, reluctance of informants to advertise their mother tongue knowledge, for various reasons no access to archive data, etc.

In order to overcome mentioned difficulties of field collection of material and searching the additional sources of language data the following questions are touched upon in the article: "Can metalanguage reflection of an informant be a reliable source for the description of the dialect, namely for its sociolinguistic parameterization?" And "What exactly sociolinguistic parameters of the dialect based on this source may be described?". The study was realized in 2014 in the village Aleksandrovskoe of Tomsk region located in the northern part of that region. The expedition was realized with support of Russian Humanitarian Science Foundation (№ 12-14-70600).

To obtain reliable conclusions of the research by the collection of field data a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods was used.

As the qualitative method was unstructured interview, realized in the form of conversation with informants on household and autobiographical topics. In the interview process special questionnaires aimed at activation of metalinguistic consciousness of the informants were not used, but the situation of communication of an informant with the stranger having an interest to his language/speech, motivated respondents to pronounce on a "language" theme (about qualitative methods of linguistics, see [13]).

Quantitative applied method is a structured interview with the usage of prepared questionnaire. This method is intended a goal-seeking appeal to metalanguage representations of the interviewed respondents for the purpose of extracting information about the researched sociolinguistic situation (about quantitative, see [14]).

The main part

As is known, the sociolinguistic situation of language is measured by a significant number of parameters; it is not possible to present a full range of them within one article. In this paper we turned our attention to such social and demographic phenomena as number of native speakers, their age, an education level, and also considered nature of language behavior of informants depending on ethnic structure of marriages and confessional accessory.

The first parameter which interests a researcher at primary sociolinguistic description of small language is **the number of its speakers**.

In conversations with the application of unstructured interview informants willingly touch on the themes of the number of language community. However, they seldom mention a specific number of dialect speakers, but confined themselves to assertion that its number rapidly decreases.

Application of a method of the structured interview showed that informants, in generally, are well informed on quantity of dialect speakers. In response to question number 1: ***"How many people in village Aleksandrovskoe speak German dialect?"*** most of them indicated a number of 30 – 40 people. It should be noted that respondents consciously called not the total number of inhabitants of village Aleksandrovskoe identifying themselves with the German nationality, but directly speakers of language of researchers' interest. Sometimes informants indicated not a number of people, but the number of families which members speak German dialect.

It is known that **the average age of "small" language speakers** largely (considerably) indicates prospect of its survival. The usage of unstructured interviews showed that in ordinary metalanguage consciousness of questioned Germans is embodied such phenomenon of language reality, as the relationship between age characteristics of a dialect speaker and comprehension level of this idiom. Thus, in the unstructured interviews informants repeatedly mention that German dialect is spoken fluently predominantly by the aged.

Section number 2 for a structured interview contains the following request ***"Specify the average age of your fellow villagers with a good comprehension level of German dialect"***. The most common reactions of the Germans in this part of the structured interview are *"nu, wie ich, schon alt" (well, as old as me); "ja, nur die Alte" (well, just the old ones); "die Leit die sin iver siebzig" (who is over seventy)* etc. Thus, informants unanimously indicate that only Germans of the oldest age group fluently speak the dialect.

Based on metalanguage data it is also possible to rank the researched language community according to the comprehension level of a German dialect. Due to metalanguage statements children of informants usually know German dialect in a passive form and grandsons don't know at all.

Another scale which is accepted to measure a sociolinguistic situation of a small language is **an ethnic character of marriages** of its speakers.

In unstructured interviews Germans from Russian-German marriages often mention that fact that the ethnic origin of their spouse had negative

influence on competence of the mother tongue. German dialect speakers from ethnically "pure" marriages also notice the connection of such phenomena as language and ethnic composition of the marriage: *"Ja, die hat aber n russische man, schon alles vergessa, und wir, wir sin beide Teitsch und spreche Teitsch"* (Yes, she has a Russian husband [about her sister], and she forgot everything, but we are both Germans and speak [to each other] in German).

It is known, that in the interfamilial communicative sphere of ethnically mixed marriages there is a refusal of minority language in favor of majority one. However, as our research experience of the language of the Russian Germans shows, sociolinguistic situation in the habitat often develops in such a way that in ethically "pure" marriages preference may be given to the majority language as a mean of interfamilial communication (e.g., due to low language loyalty of the communicants, individual characteristics of their language biography, etc.). In order to clarify the status of the German dialect in the interfamilial sphere of Germans in village Aleksandrovskoe informants during the structured interview were asked by the question number 3: ***"Which statement is true: a) in marriages where a husband and a wife are Germans, interfamilial communication proceeds predominantly in German dialect, b) in marriages where a husband and a wife are Germans, interfamilial communication proceeds predominantly in Russian".***

Absolute majority of interviewed dialect speakers confirmed that communication in German-German marriages mostly proceeds in German dialect. Commenting on their answers, the Germans also noted that if the communicative act attended by dialect speakers, who knows it rather in passive than in active form (for example, children or grandchildren), communication proceeds in two languages – Russian language and German dialect. In scientific discourse this phenomenon is usually denoted by *code switching*. Germans from ethnically pure marriages illustrate it as follows: *"Nu, wann kommt die Tochter, mir spreche so und so" (Well, and if the daughter comes, we speak with her so and so); "Mit den – ans Wort Teitsch, ans – Russisch" (With them [children] – one word in German, one word – in Russian).*

In dialectology the regularity is removed: the higher **the educational qualification of the person** is, the more his speech meets literary standards and is freer from dialect and colloquial features. Therefore the low education level has positive impact on safety of a dialect in a habitat [15].

However, results of our research show that for the naive speaker mentioned interaction of language and such social phenomenon as a level of education is not so obvious: in the materials collected by means of interview without special questionnaire, it weren't found out statements on this subject.

At the same time, inclusion in the structured interview of a question №4 ***"What education level is typical for inhabitants of village Aleksandrovskoe with a good comprehenshion level of a German dialect: a) the secondary education, b) the high school partially completed education, c) secondary vocational education, d) the high education, e) without education"*** allowed to obtain important data of sociolinguistic character. According to the responses of informants on the above question, we can conclude that the representatives of the older age group with high comprehension level of the researched language have mostly high school partially completed education: they managed to graduate a few classes (usually 2–3 classes) in German schools on the river Volga.

Some of them continued their education in Russian schools in places of deportation, but due to the poor living conditions, employment in industry and collective farms, didn't graduate it.

It is known that **membership in a religious community** is an opportunity to communicate with the help of mother tongue, therefore, it is an important factor in maintaining a small language under conditions of foreign language environment. This connection of the linguistic and extralinguistic phenomena is reflected in ordinary metalanguage consciousness. In conversations without usage of the special questionnaire religious Germans quite often note that they didn't forget the German dialect due to visit meetings of believers and reading religious literature in German. The informants, who aren't members of confessional communities, don't discuss the subject "language-religion".

As stated before, conditions of field expedition are not always favorable for realization of goals and don't allow to capture by means of observation all communicative spheres where the "small" language is used. Among this, so to say, "inaccessible" for observing sphere are meetings of local religious community: due to various reasons they can be not carried out during the expedition. Also, communities' members not always give confidence to strangers "from city" and therefore can not allow representatives of expeditionary team to attend the meetings.

In order to analyze speech behavior of the Germans of village Aleksandrovskoe according to metalanguage consciousness in the mentioned communication sphere question number 5 was formulated: ***"In what language are carried out ceremonies in the German religious community of village Aleksandrovskoe: a) in Russian, b) in the***

German dialect, c) in High German, d) in other language".

According to collected answers to this question, we can conclude that the religious ceremonies the Germans of village Aleksandrovskoe carry out in High German. Informants answered the question mainly as follows: "*auf literaturisch"(in literary one); "uf richtig Teitsch"(in real German); "uf reines Teitsch" (in pure German).*

It is necessary to say that according to our field experience, the Russian Germans of Catholic and Lutheran faiths carry out church service with the usage of religious texts (first of all bibles) in High German, but when reading of these texts aloud the literary language gets a strong dialect shade. However, on the results of usage of structured interview we did not get any comments that refer to mentioned phenomenon. It allows us to claim that this nuance of speech behavior of the Russian Germans is not actualized in their metalanguage consciousness.

Conclusion

In this article some results of a study carried out on the material of endangered German dialects of Siberia show that ordinary metalanguage reflection can be a source for socio-linguistic description of a dialect. The objects of spontaneous metalanguage reflection (interview without usage of a questionnaire) of the dialect speakers without special theoretical knowledge belong the phenomena of social functioning of language. However, data obtained by the qualitative method do not always contain information about all the phenomena that interest a scientist at a sociolinguistic description of an idiom. In order to get more detailed information about these phenomena the usage of techniques aimed at enhancing metalanguage reflection of the informants, such as demonstrated above specially prepared structured interview is necessary.

Received data are reliable as research results with the usage of qualitative and quantitative methods of collecting field data do not contradict each other. That is confirmed by the results of a method of observation over described sociolinguistic situation, which we used along with interviewing of the informants.

At the same time the research showed the metalanguage consciousness is the supplier of data about only "brightest" for the inhabitant points of interaction of language and society and therefore modeling of a sociolinguistic situation according to metalanguage consciousness is advisable at primary description of a "small" language.

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