

# Kazakhstani Koreans' Conflict of Linguistic Identity: In-between the Sovietized and Kazakhstani Citizens

Soon-ok Myong and Byong-soon Chun

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

**Keywords**—Ethnic Kazakhstani Koreans, Soviet Korean's Russification, Linguistic Identity, Russian-Kazakh Dichotomy.

## I. INTRODUCTION

THIS paper drew the in-depth cultural geography inside the former Soviet Koreans (the so-called *Goryeoin*) group by representing their conflictive situations of linguistic identities in the circumstance of pushing their transformation from the Soviet identity into the citizens of a new independent state.

The former Soviet Koreans were the ethnic minority who were strongly assimilated to Sovietization, prescribing themselves as 'those who have Russian spirit', and keeping strong pride as the Soviets [1]. They had desperately striven for surviving harsh oppression of the host country, and at the moment of the World War II, they managed to succeed in transformation to the model Soviets accepted in the Soviet society. In this process, they regarded their ethnic language rather as an obstacle to the success in life and quickly assimilated to the Soviet language.

After the Soviet dissolution, the indigenes-led movement of nation-state building in each independent state built up the Sovietized immigrant ethnics' anxiety and sense of crisis on the future. In the independent state of Kazakhstan, the most conspicuous part of reviving the indigenes' ethnic identity and promoting their state-building was the linguistic policy of

adopting the indigenous language as the state language, which made other immigrant ethnics unable to escape from the social structure of discrimination. Having actively participated in Sovietization and unable to speak the indigenous language, Kazakhstani Koreans should be affiliated again to the changed society and become its citizens: in this process, the linguistic conflict is an inescapable problem of the present progressive form.

In the meantime, researches on the *Goryeoin* have been accumulated in various areas, with some researches highlighting their historical process of formation as the 'Korean immigrant group' and their living conditions. Still, they have not reached a microscopic approach to highlight their dynamic process of adapting as citizens to the new independent state. This paper intends to go beyond the lack of depth in existing researches, toward vivid representation of the space of linguistic conflict and tension on the place of life based on research subjects.

The work of representing the attitudes, sentiments, and practices of research subjects — shown in the phase of losing the linguistic sense of self-identity — and pondering their meanings through qualitative research is to communicate with the research subjects and will provide important clues for the future research and understanding on the *Goryeoin*.

The most fundamental data for this research were from participatory observation, in-depth and unofficial interviews conducted from June in 2010 to June in 2011, and referenced literature included the Soviet archives, the White Papers, and the Soviet Koreans' ethnic newspapers such as *Lenin Kichi* (1938-1990) and *Goryeo Ilbo* (1992-now). The research subjects included the Koreans in Almaty affiliated with *Goryeoin* Ethnic Cultural Center, *Goryeo Ilbo*, Korean Evangelical Church, and Won Buddhism. Amongst these 19 informants, all except one were Russian-speakers; Korean and Kazakh-speakers were 6 and 2, respectively.

This research mainly targeted the senior generation who has mainly affiliated with Almaty *Goryeoin*'s activities and religious associations, thus having a limit to generally apply to the other generations who have not experienced the Soviet regime or those who live outside Almaty.

## II. CULTURAL IDENTITY: STRUGGLE AND VIOLENCE

Language is not simply an instrument of communication but contains the explicit and implicit rules of communication shared by the members of a group, and the social groups

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sharing the same language are considered those of the same cultural sphere. Seen through the linguistic lens of (Ferdinand de) Saussure, culture is a system that dominates everyday practice, thoughts, or activities of the members of a society, and that generates collective cultural phenomena. In Saussurean terms of linguistic system theory, however, the combination of the signifier and the signified is arbitrary [2]. Drawing upon Saussurean linguistic structural theory, postmodernists described unstable and indeterminate subjects that the signifier can never arrive at or be fixed to the signified, which is to say, the 'infinite deferment of significance.'

The postmodern subject is described as a nomadic, indeterminate and deferred state, but Stuart Hall describes identity as the subject's positioning according to the context as a semi-nomadic state. Hall's positioning is arbitrary and context-dependent, thus defining 'culture is a political action and a site of struggle where victory is not guaranteed at all' [3]. His cultural studies are concerned with endlessly disclosing the power relations present in the society to investigate how marginal or subordinate sub-groups struggle against the dominant group for keeping and gaining their own cultural spaces [3].

Amartya Sen suggests that identity is a matter of choice in a certain context, warning that arguing and stressing a dogmatic identity generate separatism and violence [4]. A process in which a marginal group keeps their own cultural identity is never smooth, but as an ongoing struggle, easy to suffer from contradiction, conflict, and schism. The common emphasis on communalism at the state level to establish the state's order and identity oppresses and alienates the diversity of individuals and groups. Song Ki-Chan's research [5] reminds us that in the Japanese society, Korean diaspora's frequent use of Japanese aliases was not their free and subjective choices but ascribed to the communalist project of the state that claimed to stand for multicultural coexistence, which is actually the symbol of repressed and subjected beings who have still not escaped from the remnants of the colonial age.

The present-day multicultural policies rising in multiethnic states foreground the discourse of 'multiethnic and multicultural coexistence' or 'tolerance' as the alternative to overcome the inner schism and difference in the process of integrating the state, while hiding the state ideology. Switzerland, which adopted multiple languages as official, is pointed out as an exemplary case of linguistic multicultural realization that basically guarantees the minority groups' rights to choose their languages [6]. However, still many countries are adopting a single official language, and even such a country as to claim to stand and legislate for multi-language is actually oriented to nationalism or assimilationism that prioritizes the language of majority in its actual contents, where the conflicts with minority groups are latent.

Since the dissolution of the former Soviet Union, independent states have witnessed the rise of ethno-nationalism that sovereignty comes from the indigenes, and of territorial nationalism that such indigene who have lived in the territory have exclusive rights over any other ethnic group [7]. These revivals of indigenous nationalism to recover the indigenes'

identity lost in the history of being conquered by other nations shook up the survival basis of other ethnic groups as well as the White émigrés including Russians and Germans. The project of building an indigenous nation-state that claimed to stand for multiculturalism which was nevertheless to be allowed only in specific cultural spheres was conspicuous in linguistic policies. The rise of indigenous language as the state language is obstructing social integration by causing social discrimination against the ethnic minorities speaking Russian, the former common language of all the ethnic groups. The case of Kyrgyzstan, which withdrew from the initial monolingual policy of indigenous language and changed to the bilingual system including Russian as the second official language [8], demonstrated the conflict between the ideology of the indigenous nation-state and the linguistic identities of immigrant ethnic groups.

The ethnic minorities' conflict of linguistic identity that this paper intends to identify is described as a process of struggle for the socially underprivileged to maintain their self-language in the historical and social contexts. The Kazakhstani Koreans who have linguistically assimilated the fastest to Russia, lost their ethnic language, and come to speak only Russian, are rejecting the obligation of the new state language and walking on the way of an internal struggle. In what follows, their identity shown in the linguistic conflict will turn out to be a political process of producing the difference between two languages in order to justify their self-language in a specific context, by which to construct and essentialize the boundary between the self-culture and the other-culture.

### III. LINGUISTIC RUSSIFICATION OF THE FORMER SOVIET KOREANS

About 500 thousand Koreans scattered over the former Soviet region are the Korean diaspora who look certainly Korean, while not speaking Korean but using Russian names and languages. Before they were deported to the Central Asian region from the Primorski Krai (Maritime Province), however, they had preserved their own language and customs, splendidly displaying the national competence in the crisis of their motherland. By the forcible relocation of the whole Korean ethnic group in Primorski Krai in the Stalin's era, the Koreans came to be scattered over Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan; this became a moment of complete assimilation to the Soviet society.

Around the time when Joseon on the Korean Peninsula became incorporated into the imperialist Japan, Koreans began to leave their motherland to escape from confusion and political oppression, crossing over the northern-farthest state border to the Imperial Russia, finally settling in the Far-East Primorski Krai. In spite of their poor status and environment in the host society, the Korean settlers developed their settlement into the foremost base of overseas independence movement for the motherland which had degraded to the colony of Japanese imperialism. Their independence movement was not a temporary resistance but elaborate, organizational, and aggressive struggles that established a myriad of nationalist schools, independence army forces, and the nationalist press,

with total mobilization of the Joseon patriots of will who projected mutual assistance with the international society and did not decline armed fights.

The Far-East Koreans' organizational powers and forces that resisted the imperialist Japan were utilized as a dynamic for the Soviet revolution. That is, the formidable National Independence Army contributed to the Soviet construction in alliance with the Red Army, but had to be disintegrated immediately since. Following the Soviet construction in the Far-East, the outbreak of the World War II completely changed the Koreans' destiny to the long history of break with the motherland. Also, as the Far East region became the field of contention between the Soviet Union and the imperialist Japan with the World War ahead, Stalin worried that the existence of Koreans in the periphery would be utilized by the Japanese intelligence activities in giving damage to the Soviet Union or becoming the pretext for Japan to wage war, so that he forcibly deported all Koreans in the Far-East to the Central Asia [9]. In this process of forcible relocation, the Koreans had to suffer from a number of sacrifices due to famine, disease, and coldness, and even in the new settlement, they were degraded into the 'special immigrants' instead of the normal Soviet citizens, thus unable to relocate their residences. Any disclosure of a nationalist color had to be the target of oppression and purge.

The Koreans, most of whom had still spoken their ethnic language until the forcible relocation, faced with the radical moment of linguistic Russification without any choice under the reign of terror when ethnic language speakers were easily doomed to 'anti-revolutionary' or 'anti-regime' elements. Immediately after the forcible relocation, the command of 'Reorganization of National Schools' was transmitted down as of April, 1938, forcibly changing all such ethnic schools of immigrant groups except indigenes as Germans, Volgars, Tunkans, and Uyghurs, to Russian-exclusive schools [10]. Subsequently in December, 1938, the directive of 'On Ethnic Language Materials' [10] commanded disposal of ethnic publications, so that all materials based on Korean ethnic language came to be burned out. By the conversion of all Korean ethnic schools to the Soviet general schools, Russian became the foremost language and the ethnic language degraded into the secondary. By the liquidation of ethnic language materials and the deprivation of opportunities to teach the ethnic language, Russian began to replace the language of the Koreans, amongst whom nationalist writers were oppressed or converted to the Soviet writers who praised the socialist ideology and regime, thus quickly breaking the bondage with their ethnic spirit and language.

The Korean new settlers whose ethnic pride was degraded and treated sometimes as none other than criminals came to have a chance of transformation in the crisis of the host country as the World War II broke out. Their loyalty displayed in the rear labor force for wartime goods mobilization and their distinguished record of harvest in Korean Kolkhozes served as a good chance for them to be acknowledged as the Soviet war heroes. Overcoming the extreme hardship during the initial settlement, the Koreans came to settle as justifiable Soviet

people. This was from their active linguistic assimilation to Russophone-centrism.

Russian language education was an inevitable choice given forcibly in the era of ethnicity oppression, but Koreans went so far as to reject the education based on ethnic language other than Russian [10]. The use of Russian in the Soviet regime became a communicative means that dominates the Soviet social lives as a normal qualification to become a member of the Soviets, and the so-called *intelligentsiya* (intellectuals) or professionals. The Koreans' attitude that disregarded their ethnic language was due to some surging awareness: should they not follow Russian-speaking, they would not satisfy the qualifications for entering the schools of higher learning or becoming the Party members, so that they could neither become sure of the future, and the adhesion to ethnic language would not help the success in life [19].

The active character of Soviet Koreans' linguistic assimilation is well-evidenced by the data compared to other ethnic groups. According to the statistics in 1979 [11], two major native languages for the total 389,000 Soviet Koreans were Korean for 55.4% and Russian for 44.4%. This statistics suggests that the original mother tongue speakers amongst them were much less than those amongst other ethnic groups, given that the average first-language representation of ethnic languages amongst the total Soviet population was 86.4%, while that of Russian was only 13.6%. Also, in terms of Russian fluency, Russophones represented 49.9% of Uzbeks, 54.3% of Kazakhs, 26.4% of Turkmen, 29.9% of Kyrgyzes, and 30.4% of Tajiks, while those speakers represented 92.1% of Koreans, which were overwhelmingly higher than those of other ethnic groups [12].

Along with the linguistic Russification of Koreans, Russian-style naming and renaming were quickly generalized [23]. According to the list of various conditions of Koreans on the former Soviet archives [10], [13], almost all Koreans maintained their original ethnic names until the forcible relocation, but immediately after the World War II, Russian names began to represent a majority of the names on the Korean Effort Heroes list and came by 1950s to be already universalized to the extent that it was hard to find the Koreans with ethnic names.

However, the dissolution of the Soviet Union demolished the physical and social bases of the regime, completely disintegrating the life bases of Soviet people. Still at present when post-Sovietization is proceeding in independent states, the Soviet Koreans whose bloods are Korean nevertheless speak Russian as their 'mother tongue', use Russian-style names, and never forget such proud appellations as the 'Heroes of Soviet Construction', 'Geniuses of Rice Farming', and 'War and Labor Heroes', still possessing the strong pride in themselves who have woven the successful drama as the Soviet Koreans by solidifying the life-bases in the Soviet society and showing conspicuous outcomes in various areas.

#### IV. KAZAKHS' NATION-STATE BUILDING AND THE STATUS OF KOREANS

The Soviet Korean scholar Han Baleri stressed that Soviet Koreans were a good model of the highest status and success amongst the worldwide Korean diaspora [13], given that Koreans in the Soviet era formed a thick intellectual stratum in the mainstream society over various areas such as government officials, educators, educational leaders of science academy, agricultural economy leaders, sports celebrities, and artists. However, from the moment of the Soviet dissolution and the following independence of republics, their status in the host country has changed much to date compared to the past.

*The Science, Technology and Culture of Kazakhstani Koreans* published in 2002 by Korean Scientists and Engineers Association in Kazakhstan (KAHAK) suggests the statistics of Koreans who succeeded in each social sphere of Kazakhstan. In this list, 613 Koreans were chosen as the leading expert intellectuals, including 96 people who were born in 1950s, but 46 in 1960s and only 10 in 1970s [15]. This shows that the number of next-generation Korean leaders who can exercise influential power to the society tends to decrease drastically, much in contrast to the number of the old-generation Soviet Korean leaders.

The change of Koreans' status reflects the present condition in which an absolute majority of Koreans are speaking Russian and few of them speaking Kazakh that is actually required. According to the Agency of Statistics of Kazakhstan in 2009 when it was almost 20 years after the declaration of Kazakh as the state language right after the independence [16], Kazakh-literates amongst Kazakhstani citizens over 15 years old were 93.2% of Kazakhs, 61.7% of Uzbeks, 60.8% of Uyghurs, 33.7% of Tartars, 10.5% of Koreans, 7.9% of Germans, and 6.3% of Russians. In this statistics, the lowest proportions of Kazakh-literates are found in the White émigrés such as Russians and Germans, and in Koreans who showed significantly lower figures than other colored races. Regardless of ethnic groups, however, the old generation of the former Soviet intellectuals who have lived in the urban regions, including Kazakhs, is still remaining as Kazakh-illiterates.

The Kazakhstani policy of the state language is related to Kazakhs' nation-state building project which takes its national task to recover the indigeneous identity damaged and lost in hundreds of Russian conquest. Besides, this state project stresses 'multicultural and multiethnic coexistence' to prevent interethnic schism, resistance, and conflict, but to achieve social integration in the multiethnic context of about 130 ethnic groups. Kazakhstani government's policy of considering ethnic minorities is well-exemplified by the birth of the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan in 1995, which consists of the delegates of each ethnic groups. In 2007, a constitutional revision was passed that the ethnic representatives of the Assembly can enter the Senate so as to provide a political opportunity for ethnic groups to represent their interests. Also, the ethnic culture centers under the Assembly are to support the succession and development of cultural traditions and languages of ethnic groups. Influenced by these, Kazakhstan is witnessing the frequent quotation of 'tolerance' discourse widespread over the

society, and the multicultural undiscrimination of ethnic minorities seems to be well-practiced. Still, this includes the latent dual ideology of 'multiculture' which represses diversity outside certain cultural spheres.

Despite the outcry of 'tolerance', the state-language literacy becomes augmented as the basic obligation of citizens in the project of indigenous nation-state building, thus giving birth to the effect of excluding ethnic minorities, the Kazakh-illiterates. Along with the essentialization and augmentation of Kazakh language education in all educational institutions, such policies are aggressively introduced as the transformation of naming practices on places and streets from Russian to Kazakh styles and the employment of Kazakh-speakers in official positions. These policies are naturally predicated on the necessity that the indigenes who became the subject nationals of the republic should recover their lost past, which, however, is recognized as a crisis by Kazakh-illiterates such as Russians so as to separate their social spheres of activities. Where many Kazakhs are absorbed into the official institutions, Russophone non-Kazakhs are concentrated on the private economy. The non-Kazakhs are turning their eyes onto small-scale commerces or businesses with less pressure of speaking the state language, even never expecting but avoding the employment into the official positions.

Latent in the governmental policy on language, the problem of linguistic identity is not only concerned with the non-Kazakhs, but also significantly with Kazakhs who cannot speak Kazakh. That is, Kazakh language under the Soviet regime was that which kept its thread of life in rural areas, while urban Kazakhs were Sovietized ones who mainly spoke Russian and still remain as Kazakh-illiterates after the independence. The problem of Kazakhs' self-language literacy yielded discrimination about the illiterates within their ethnic group, becoming a stimulant to the policy of recovering their lost linguistic identity.

Kazakhstani policy of recovering Kazakh language was implemented right after the declaration of independence in December 16, 1991. The declaration of 'Kazakh is the sole state language of the independent Republic of Kazakhstan' in January 28, 1993 prescribed 'Russian is a language for interethnic communication', which was to lower the status of Russian and a big shock to Kazakh-illiterates. In order to mitigate the resistance, schism, state confusion and shocks by this declaration, the Constitution stipulated since 1995 'the state language is Kazakh, and Russian is acknowledged as an official language' [17]. However, the more concretizing legal apparatus on the state language went so far as to outspokenly weaken the weight of Russian by announcing the regulation of maintaining the function of Russian only in the cultural sector. In May 30, 2006, the «Decree of the President of Kazakhstan on the state program operation and development of languages for 2001 ~ 2010 years» prescribed that the state language be the official language of administrative works over the state including legislature, judicature, administration, military, and education [18], and this was a concrete command of obliging general citizens to use the state language.

This linguistic policy of Kazakhstan is evaluated as a policy which has gradually increased its intensity step-by-step with certain grace periods, compared to Uzbekistan which executed a hard-line policy to settle Uzbek language as their indigenous language right after the independence. This soft landing of linguistic policy and cultural consideration for the immigrant ethnic groups notwithstanding, it is the reality that ethnic minorities become marginalized into the non-mainstream, which is well demonstrated by those Koreans who achieved the success in life. Amongst the present Kazakhstani Koreans, successful ones are entrepreneurs who are distinguished in such businesses as distribution, finance, and construction occupying overwhelming proportion of the domestic market. The Korean politicians who succeeded by entering the Senate as delegates of ethnic organizations are also the men of wealth who have built up a fortune by taking the chance during the transition period after the Soviet dissolution. Even the successful Korean politicians are pointed out as not so much displaying political competence but becoming the target of consideration as an ethnic minority, which is to give formal representation to calm down their alienation and conflicts in the process of nation-state building [22]. It is not only difficult for the ethnic minority to enter the official positions, but also rare for them to have a chance of advancement, and moreover to be employed as political leaders or for higher official positions, so that it seems meaningless to dream of becoming an official itself.

Under the condition that it is difficult without governmental consideration for Koreans who cannot speak the state language to expect the birth of Korean leaders who display political competence, a majority of Koreans are concentrated on private economy, and this is partly because occupational structure transformed as the Soviet state enterprises became privatized and the economic system converted to the market economy, as well as diversifying the kinds of occupations. That is, unlike the kinds of occupations during the socialist Soviet era, the present era is witnessing the increased of chance to participate in economic activities due to the exponential expansion of service industries such as diversified wholesail and retail, food, construction, trade, real estate and rental industries [21]. The concentration on private economy is partly due to this change of economic structure, but also to the fact that it is a sphere where Koreans can escape from the obligation to speak Kazakh as the state language. Still, the exceptional sphere from Kazakh literacy is decreasing. This is because Kazakh-speakers are expanding their influence as Kazakhs are moving from rural areas to cities for economic activities and education, and the government is leading an active policy of attracting Kazakh population from the neighboring countries.

For any other ethnic language speakers or Russophones who live in Kazakhstan, Kazakh-speaking seems to become an inevitable and formidable obligation in most spheres of the society. The state language illiterates will be branded as those who neglect the obligation of citizens, and will have difficulty in gaining justifiable rights and enjoying their status, so that their marginalization from the mainstream society cannot but intensify.

#### V. DOUBLE ATTITUDE TOWARD THE STATE LANGUAGE

The ethnic Koreans' characteristic attitude seen in their experience of linguistic conflict during the transition period of the official state language of the Republic of Kazakhstan has a double character of external reception and internal rejection. As if to reflect the inevitable environment in which they cannot help avoiding the necessity and requirement of Kazakh in everyday lives as Kazakhstani citizens whose 'mother tongue' is basically Russian, they consistently describe the state language as a must-learn. However, they are neglecting the practice of learning it. Intersecting here are their sentiment toward the indigenes, obligatory sense of pressure as citizens, and an internal conflict to treat the indigenous language as the other.

##### *A. Patriotic Citizens and Their Rejection of the State Language*

The Koreans always answer positively to the obligation of Kazakh literacy. This seems to reflect well the long trustful relationship with Kazakhs. The amicable sentiment between the Koreans and the indigenes began with the experience of special benefactor relationship that the indigenes are said to have provided breads and shelters for Koreans who were on the verge of dying during the oppression and misery of forcible relocation, which is also deeply seated in the minds of the Korean descendants. This relationship serves as an essential matter for the Korean diplomatic delegates or head managers on the official meetings with Kazakh representatives to deliver amicable well-wishing remarks that can encourage the atmosphere amongst seated people. Such a positive reputation that Kazakhs are the 'kind people who hospitably treat guests' and Koreans themselves are the 'diligent and highly responsible nation' became universalized and symbolic of both ethnicities.

Aside from the Koreans' pro-Kazakh sentiment and positive reception of the indigenous language, Kazakh-speaking Koreans are so rare as to be a 'something to see.' Kazakhstani government has encouraged the study of the state language with the free support of Kazakh teaching curricula targeting Kazakh-illiterates in each ethnic organization in order to expand the base of using Kazakh after it was designated as the state language. In line with the frequent discussion of the state language at the state level, the Korean ethnic organization under the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan seems to be giving much effort to take the lead of overcoming this problem. Some propose the agendas focused on activating and realizing Kazakh language education, and others make resolutions on the collective efforts that reflect professional opinions. However, the results of these resolutions and efforts to support are pointed out as staying at formal pretense rather than effective outcomes. Regarding this problem, this researcher could witness a specific scene by direct participation in a conference of professionals and related persons.

A conference in Almaty in July, 2010, supported by the Assembly and held by the Korean association, treated such themes as to reflect the reality of Kazakhstan: the importance of the state language and patriotism as the citizens, and social

integration. On the conference table, the representative of Korean ethnic association pointed out the importance of Kazakh as the state language and stressed that they should give more active efforts to teach and practice Kazakh in future. To this remark, a Kazakh who was a related person of the Assembly responded poignantly as if to have awaited it: "You people had already said the same remark 10 years ago, so what has been changed?" Such a kind of remarks by the Korean ethnic representative has been so far commonly made in any official meeting, so that it was disregarded as one of repetitive formalities distant to the reality. The public scolding toward the Korean representative was to overtly indicate that although Koreans had commonly stressed the importance of the state language and the necessity of learning it, they had just stayed at words but never shown the actual consequences.

Just as the Korean ethnic representative did not make any excuse for or retort against the public scolding on the state language problem, many Koreans acknowledged that they had neglected the obligation despite the authorities' provision of enough grace periods for them to learn the state language. Rather, they confessed to this researcher that they felt sorry and guilty for having not followed the obligation despite the governmental graceful action. In this confession, they raised no question about why the indigenous language should be designated as the state language and why they should be pressed by the linguistic intensification policy, rather presupposing the rightness and appropriateness of the state language:

*Here is the Republic of Kazakhstan, so even if the president is not a Kazakh but another ethnic, (policies on) Kazakh language cannot be stopped. Not learning Kazakh is a non-sense, and who argues about Kazakh is a bad person. When you work as a public servant in Korea, isn't it a duty to speak Korean? (80 years old, male, former professor)*

Assuming the state language as a must-learn and the policy of obligatory learning as appropriate, he is actually suffering from the heavy responsibility for this. Another Korean whispered to the researcher with elated voice that an important announcement on the state language was made in April, 2011:

*Right after the presidential election, President gave an important direction in the Convention of the Association of Ethnic Minorities. He said 'the old do not know Kazakh and it's hard to learn for them; also, things like documents (in the authorities) cannot be set to Kazakh blindly, so use dual language.' So, we took breath. From now on, if someone asks me to speak Kazakh in shops or anywhere, I'm going to say, 'Haven't you heard about the direction of President?' (73 years old, female, former announcer in Goryeomal Radio Broadcasting)*

Actually, the senior generation of Koreans often asserted that they were not the citizens of active age groups and had rare documentary works in Kazakh to contact the official institutions; it was already late for them to learn Kazakh; no one would quarrel about the senior people's inability to speak

Kazakh; and there would be no difficulty in living without speaking Kazakh. However, they showed sensitive reaction to the presidential announcement of exceptional consideration on applying the state language policy. The presidential special direction was highly welcomed and he is described as a kind benefactor who considered the positions of ethnic minorities and liberated them from the obligation of Kazakh-speaking. They take breath since it became possible to assert the right to demand a Russian form when public servants gave a Kazakh form, as President indicated.

The sense of pressure from the state language in everyday lives is inevitable even for this researcher affiliated with a national university here, who have firsthand felt it ever-increasing day by day for the recent years. It is becoming universalized to base Kazakh on academic activities, administrative affairs in school, meetings, and all other works, so that this researcher who has communicated in Russian is having difficulty in linguistic communication unlike before. Amongst new collegiate students as well, those of Kazakh class are overwhelming those of Russian class in number. As well as in educational institutes, exclusive Kazakh use is actually becoming obligated in all public institutions in the same context.

Koreans' consistent remarks of positive reception of the state language are well-reflecting their pro-Kazakh sentiment and remind us of the welcomed model citizens who participate together in constructing the state identity. On the other hand, while suffering from the pressure and crisis on the state language, they eschew the obligation of speaking the state language and depend on the state's consideration that allows the use of Russian, or hope for hazily stepping aside from the linguistic conflict encountered in everyday lives, not disclosing their substantial entities.

#### *B. Boundary between Self-language and Other-Language: 'Superior' versus 'Inferior'*

The way for Koreans to escape from the heavy pressure and crisis imposed by the obligatory state language seems not to stay at the self-accusation of not fulfilling the obligation or at the external reception, but simply to learn the state language in practice. The state language practice is a way to maintain their favorable sentiment with the indigenes as they want, and also a shortcut for them to settle as justifiable citizens required by the government of the independent state.

However, the research subjects specify the list of reasons why they cannot help neglecting to learn Kazakh while always commenting 'Kazakh, yes, that's a must-learn.' A Kazakhstani Korean who said herself had grown up in Uzbekistan but not spoken Uzbek, and grown up in a city thus could not speak the ethnic language nor Kazakh, but could only speak Russian, confessed that there was actual difficulty even though she made efforts to learn Kazakh:

*I was a teacher of foreign language (French and German), and once I saw my grandson's Kazakh textbook, I found it not well-made. In schools, history, geography, and literature textbooks are all in Kazakh, but even teachers don't know well,*

*so don't teach that, and just rate marks roughly. Kazakh education now is abnormally done. Kazakh state-language textbooks have only a series of words, even the grammar is hard to understand. Grandson is good at English or other subjects. The problem is not a student, but the teachers and textbooks to teach Kazakh.* (77 years old, female, former school teacher)

Revealing the difficulty of learning Kazakh, she was proud of her family all of whom, from herself to her grandchildren, preferred learning English to Kazakh. English is recognized as an essential language for all to speak on, and she reveals that not only Koreans, but also some Kazakhs who are poor at Kazakh are concentrated more on English. Many students are valuing English over the state language, since Kazakh is considered full of flaws from the textbooks to teachers that determine the results of learning. Also, amongst the generation of grandchildren who disregard Kazakh, the realization of 'Kazakh as a must-learn' of which they frequently say is considered a vague future story which might be realized only in far-off future generation, not in this, children's, or even grandchildren's generation. Amongst the generation of children most of whom are in the active age group, one cannot hear of anyone who is learning or speaking Kazakh hard, but rather that they have no interest in learning Kazakh just like the old generation.

The unready Kazakh textbooks and teachers, and the qualitatively unfulfilled condition are not the whole reasons. Moreover, they spurn any motive to learn Kazakh since the language itself has grammatical and linguistic flaws, thus not suiting to globalization as an imperfect language.

*It would be good in Kazakhstan to learn Kazakh. But to study international disciplines, Kazakh is not enough. Is there any reason to make new Kazakh words? Enough to use what we've used (Russian).* (80 years old, male, former lecturer)

The above Korean's remark affirms that Kazakh is none other than a language functioning only within the state in a practical aspect and the necessary language for global studies is the existing Russian. A former mechanical engineer who points out the incompleteness of Kazakh as an academic language suggests that Kazakh scholars are also bent on overcoming this problem (63 years old, male, former engineer). That is, it is not enough for Kazakh letters to be accepted as an academic language and most Kazakh sentences are filled with Russian words. Also, many academic or foreign terms are not named in Kazakh yet, so that such equivalent Kazakh words continue to be made while many words are loaned from Russian as it is. He mimics Kazakh scholars with a facial expression by saying that they are pondering on new Kazakh words while sitting around a table and thinking like "(holding a ball-pen in the mouth and rolling the eyes upward) what should we make for this in our word...?"

The Koreans' avoidance of Kazakh by various reasons seen in their perspective appears to run against their reality encountered by the expansion of Kazakh-based spheres. Their indication of Kazakh as an immature language with linguistic

flaws was that which considered Russian, the existing language they have used. Whether in the past or at present, the common language used across the ethnic boundary has been the Soviet language, Russian, while the indigenous language has remained only in rural areas, and even Kazakh intellectuals are prioritizing Russian which has been used universally in cities. With implicit presupposition of the superiority of Russian, Kazakh might be the only language for the indigenes to recover urgently, but is considered by Koreans hardly possible to be used even by their future generations.

As they were the model people in the Soviet era, they seem to maintain good external reputation also in the independent republic of Kazakhs, particularly keeping invariably favorable relationship with them and well-receiving the imposed obligation of the state language literacy. Still, in the invisible scene behind, there is recognition that Kazakh is an 'inferior' language incompatible with these characteristics. The stereotype seated deeply inside the minds of Koreans contradicts the citizens' obligation to observe and the sentiment toward the indigenes, giving birth to deceptive inconsistency and a double-faced attitude.

## VI. MEANING OF INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE FOR KAZAKHSTANI KOREANS

### *A. Illiteracy and Civilization*

In Koreans' conflict and reluctance in front of the obligatory state language, there are inherent ideas of illiteracy and civilization that have been inscribed through their unique historical experiences and memories after settling in the Central Asia. Although Koreans and Kazakhs under the Soviet regime were the same secondary nationals who could not excel Russians, the dominant nation, Koreans' active Russification yielded 'othering' about the indigenous culture at the same time. That is to say, they who were inevitably Koreans in appearance or consanguinity nevertheless attempted to internalize Russian styles in language, marriage, and culture, regarding the non-Russian indigenous, even their own ethnic things, as the 'other' culture, thus defining themselves as 'those who are close to Russians.'

In the Soviet era when universal Sovietization was promoted and nationalism excluded, such words and behaviors as to appreciate or discriminate ethnic groups were tabooed [14]. When the status of Koreans increased with the 1988 Seoul Olympics at the late Soviet era, however, the Soviet Koreans' inside momentarily came up over the surface. A Soviet Korean intellectual pointed out in *Lenin Kichi*, the ethnic Soviet Korean newspaper [19], "When Russian dominated Kazakhs, Central Asians had no autonomous state systems and the literates represented no more than 2%. But the area of Kazakhstan came to develop splendidly by the Soviet regime, and transformed from the previous periphery based on nomadic lives to a large industrial and agricultural center." Although Kazakhs regard their history before independence as a colonial history when they were deprived of their territory and sovereignty by Russians and fallen to the colonized since the time of Imperial Russia, the above Soviet Korean shows the same perspective as

those of the past dominant ethnic groups or powers that Kazakhs became civilized from illiteracy through the time. That is, it is based on the 'Orientalism' that Kazakhs were the 'barbarian' ethnos who had led nomadic lives without letters and came to escape from illiteracy thanks to Russians.

The hidden ideology that is so invisible from outside regards Russian as the self-language and the indigenous Kazakh as the other-language, which not only serves as the pretext to disregard the practice of the obligatory state language, but also solidifies the status of Russian as the self-language. Although Kazakh was designated as the state language and is used by an absolute majority of Kazakhs, such reasons why it could not be learned are emphasized as the flaws of grammars and textbooks, Cyrillic letters loaned from Russian, the lack of linguistic originality, the lack of proper words which are thus in the making, and incompatibility with global studies. As a consequence, the indigenous language is limited to a language of inferior existence which has just escaped from the world of illiteracy. This production of difference becomes a justifiable ground to sustain the self-language rather than the indigenous language which seems full of flaws.

#### *B. Obedience to Power and Intrinsic Resistance: The Double Ego*

In the condition that indigenes rose to the subject nationals of the state and the status and power of indigenous culture were reversed, Kazakhstani Koreans are walking on the tough road of separatism from the indigenous language that became the state language. However, they do not exercise subjective resistance to the dominant power. Always hiding their internal subject that rejects the practice of the state language, their external looks become patriotic citizens who fulfill the state obligation. This is because disclosing their internal subject comes to destroy the positive sentiment with the indigenes they have built up and to challenge the state power.

For Kazakhstani Koreans, the state obligation is considered a 'sacred duty' to observe without exception, since they have lived as the subordinate subject or the 'subaltern' to the dominant power. Their outcomes of mimicking the dominant nation led to their pride on the one hand; the past scars left in the extremely forcible transformation of their identity also became the part of themselves on the other. The shock and terror, with which they had to be relentlessly oppressed, purged, forcibly relocated and arranged by the dishonor of anti-regime and nationalism, thus irresistibly to discard the ethnicity and be reborn as Soviets, are inscribed and operating in the unconscious. Anyone who divulged the misery and tragedy of forcible relocation to his or her family, neighbors, or any others had to be the target of punishment as an anti-regime element or a nationalist. With this gag law becoming a specter for the Koreans to date even after the Soviet dissolution, many research subjects showed reluctance with anxiety when talking on the story of forcible relocation.

When Kazakhstani Koreans say of the requirements of the supreme ruler, they stress that he or she should be 'the person who does not discriminate ethnic groups, if nothing else', and when discussing ethnic relations, they say not so much of

accusation as of appreciation and good points of other ethnic groups, repetitively emphasizing 'they should be on good terms with other ethnics', which is a trace of scar on ethnic discrimination and exclusion from the dominant power. Kazakhstani Koreans are described not only as the general reputation of 'diligent and highly responsible ethnics' but also as 'opportunists', and their Korean politicians as 'flattering people', which means they are non-subjective beings vulnerable to power. Vulnerable beings unconsciously mimic obedience in front of the 'sacred duty of the state language.' In their egos, however, the 'sacred duty' is rejected by the 'pride' in the self and the power of 'superior feeling' by the strong dichotomy between 'civilization and barbarism.'

#### VII. CONCLUSION

Just as in the former Soviet regime when Koreans were the most exemplary nationals, Kazakhstani Koreans in the independent state are also trusted as a sincere and quiet ethnic group as much acknowledged as called the fourth *Jüz* of Kazakhs by the indigenes that are classified into three *Jüzes*. Kazakhstani Koreans' patriotism toward the host country is well-exemplified by their naturalized cheering of Kazakhstan in front of the motherland people during the World-Cup preliminary league between Korea and Kazakhstan, squarely saying that their homeland is Kazakhstan.

Behind their external look of 'patriots', however, their identity is seriously crossed with that of the former Soviet Koreans. The simplification of official language by the state power contrasts with the linguistic identities of ethnic minorities and causes the distress of the socially underprivileged [20]. As a part of liquidating the disgraceful history of Russian domination and constructing a new nation-state, the indigenes designated Kazakh as the state language. An individual's inability to speak the state language is regarded as dissatisfying the basic requirement of a citizen, so that Kazakh-illiterate Koreans are naturally becoming withdrawn from the mainstream society.

The Koreans who are weak and non-subjective beings due to the past scar do not reject or complain of the governmental policy on the state language, but rather support it as a natural policy and hide their real ego. Inside the ego, the dichotomy between the 'Russian-like' superior ego that speaks Russian and the 'illiterate or barbarian' of non-Russian indigenous culture effectuates 'othering' of the state language, learning of which is thus disregarded by the Koreans. The difference of other-language that supports the superiority and rightness of self-language is continuously reconstructed and reproduced despite the external pressure.

The Koreans' identity shown in the process of maintaining the authenticity of their linguistic identity was not so much essential as political a process to exclusively essentialize their self-culture according to the contexts, and in this process, it turned out to construct more solid boundary between two cultures by producing stereotyped images about the self and the other with the materials of invisible elements such as collective memory, experience, and imagination.

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