

The spread of Russian in an area of Northern Dagestan during the early Soviet period: job or schooling difference?

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Dagestan is an area of high language density. Even in villages which are within walking distance from each other and are bound by cultural, administrative and economic ties different languages may be spoken. Until the Soviet era, local multilingualism practices were flourishing in Dagestan, with some people using up to 5 or 6 languages, including the local language, neighboring languages and some distant languages used for work communications outside the village. Command of distant languages, Russian one of them, was a gendered practice, characteristic of men, not women, who would instead stay inside the village and rarely could speak Russian (Dobrushina et al. 2018).

Since the introduction of Soviet schools at the end of the 1920s Russian began spreading rapidly as the language of mass education. Command of Russian thus quickly lost its gender-conditioned character. About 70% of women born in the 1940s across all Dagestan knew Russian, which is far more than in the 1920s.

In this study we intend to address the following question: among the people born in the 1920s-40s, that experienced the transition from the gendered practice to the gender-neuter practice (Russian as the language of school), which social group was the first to acquire Russian? How does the command of Russian during the early Soviet period depend on the job of a person? We will not present an answer yet, we will rather suggest a way to answer this question.

Data used in this study consist of retrospective family interviews (Dobrushina 2013) and come from the village of Karata and the neighboring villages Tukita, Tad-Magitl' and Tlibisho. Local languages include Karata, Tukita, Northern Akhvakh and Bagvalal respectively. Karata area belongs to the Akhvakh district, which is located in the Northern part of Dagestan in the Avar-dominated zone, with Avar as the lingua franca of the area (Volkova, 1967: 30), multidagestan.com. Russian before 1920 was spoken by about 15-30% of the population.

The occupation is a factor strongly correlated with education and gender of the person, so if we want to investigate the impact of the occupation, we should try to keep them apart. To trace the impact of the job, we divided the population into groups according to the type of the person's *occupation* ('agriculture', 'education', 'craft', 'service') and the level of *prestige* ('low' for unqualified workers and housewives, 'middle' for qualified workers, 'high' for local authority and manager positions), i.e. a collective farm worker would be tagged as *agriculture, low* and a school principal as *education, high*. We examined all four villages for periods of 1900-1919 and 1920-1939 and only Karata and Tlibisho for other periods.

The top prestige positions were almost absent before the 1920s, and in the period of 1920-1939 exclusively men were occupying them. Middle positions and later top positions, too, could be occupied by women. Since birthyear 1920 all people on top, men and women alike, had command of Russian, which is explained by the fact that all teachers, doctors and local authorities usually had college or university education.

Low prestige positions are more interesting because they allowed the person to do without command of Russian and in principle did not require higher education, so we can compare the impact of the occupation rather than education. Table 1 shows the command of Russian that low prestige workers had.

Across all types of occupations men had a higher command of Russian than women – in accordance with the findings in (Dobrushina et al. 2018).

Women born in 1920-1939 across different types of occupations have more or less similar command of Russian (36% of collective farm workers, 40% of housewives, 20% of craftswomen and 45% of women employed in service knew Russian). It seems that occupation differences did not play a significant role for women.

Men born in the same period exhibit greater differences across types of occupations: 56% of collective farm workers, 90% of craftsmen and 100% of men employed in service had command of Russian. How can we explain such a difference? Men often knew distant languages due to their travelling

practices, which was probably typical of craftsmen. On the other hand, can it be that in the early Soviet time men's crafts already required higher education and hence Russian?

We are now planning to add more data from other villages of Dagestan and identify the impact of job, education and possibly military service on command of Russian during the early Soviet times.

Figure 1. Lower prestige jobs and the command of Russian in the people born in 1920-1939.

	Karata		Tukita		Tad-Magitl'		Tlibisho		sum		sum, %	
	m	f	m	f	m	f	m	f	m	f	m	f
agriculture (<i>collective farm worker, milker</i>)	2/5 ¹	6/14	2/2	4/12	1/1	4/9	4/8	2/9	9/16	16/44	56%	36%
housewives		0/2		0/1		1/2		3/5		4/10		40%
medical services (<i>nurse</i>)		0/1								0/1		0%
craftsmanship (<i>cook, sewer, painter, shoemaker</i>)	5/6	0/2	2/2	1/2	2/2	0/1			9/10	1/5	90%	20%
service (<i>cleaner, security guard</i>)	1/1	2/7	1/1	1/1		1/1	1/1	1/2	3/3	5/11	100%	45%
education (<i>nanny</i>)				1/1						1/1		100%

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¹ Two out of five males in Karata who worked in agriculture could speak Russian, other three could not.