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**MODERN STATE OF STUDYING THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE IN**  
**THE REPUBLIC OF TAJIKISTAN**

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### Abstract

The relevance of learning Russian is increasing in the post-Soviet space, where its flow was significantly limited for a long time and is practically out of communication in the youth environment. However, the recent political and economic trends have predetermined an increasing need to introduce the Russian language into the life of Tajik citizens. This determines the characteristics and specificity of methodological approaches to its study as a "non-native" in the curricula for Tajik schools. Studying any foreign language, learning a foreign language culture is an important condition for the professional training of specialists in various fields and promotes human development in general. Today, foreign language proficiency plays a priority role in professional self-determination and solving tasks of professional growth, facilitates the development of foreign contacts with business partners. While the development of international cooperation in Tajikistan is gaining strength, every educational institution that implements secondary and higher vocational education programmes uses the Russian language. Educational institutions need to spread the Russian language among the younger generation. However, the current state of Russian language learning in educational institutions of the Republic of Tajikistan raises some concerns. This is due both to the weak material and technical and methodological resources of many secondary and higher education institutions, their inadequate technological equipment, and often insufficient quality of Russian language teaching and the lack of scientific and methodological literature.

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## **1. Introduction**

The success of mastering a foreign-language communication competence depends largely on ethnopsycholinguistic factors (Dyakova et al., 2018). Russian is a common heritage of the former Soviet republics, but the young generation brought up in the post-Soviet period has lost touch with this heritage. But today, for a number of reasons, the need to restore these ties has become evident. Therefore, there is a widespread expansion of educational programs on the subject "Russian language" after a long period of crisis. "At present, the role of the Russian language in the post-Soviet republics is increasing. It happens due to the renewal of the economic life aimed at the cooperation with Russia" (Ismailova, 2014, p. 28).

Despite fairly positive assessments regarding the official status of the Russian language, there is a lack of language environment in Tajikistan for more effective learning. The authors particularly note that the number of hours devoted to teaching Russian in schools is insufficient. Both in Soviet times and nowadays knowledge of Russian language is an important factor of cultural, scientific, social and economic development. Many parents understand this, so they try to send their children to schools where teaching is entirely in Russian. Tajik schools do not have a language environment that allows practicing Russian in everyday situations.

## **2. Problem Statement**

The research task is to review the current state of Russian language learning in post-Soviet Tajikistan and determine its role in the education system, and also to show the importance of the Russian language in the domestic and foreign policy of the country, as a language of inter-ethnic communication.

## **3. Research Questions**

The issues include the study and functioning of the Russian language in the education system and its importance as a means of inter-ethnic communication in the Republic of Tajikistan.

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

The article aims to describe the current state of Russian language learning and the peculiarities of its functioning in the Republic of Tajikistan.

## **5. Research Methods**

In their work the authors used the following methods: analytical and descriptive, including review and analysis of scientific and methodological literature on the topic of research; comparative analysis of recent developments in the study of the Russian language in the Republic of Tajikistan; generalization of the experience of teaching the Russian language.

## 6. Findings

Emomali Rahmon, President of the Republic of Tajikistan, noted that "the Russian language for us has been and remains a window into science, a means of communication with the outside world, and the loss of this capital will harm us" (Usmonov, 2012, p. 5).

The use of different languages in Tajikistan has peculiar features that reflect the political, socio-historical processes of the 20th and 21st centuries. According to the "Language Act" of 1989, the State language is Tajik and Russian is necessary for full inter-ethnic communication. The Language Act of 1991 states the same. "In 2009, the Majlisi Oli (Parliament of Tajikistan, the highest legislative and representative apparatus of the national government) issued a decree stating that only the state language (Tajik) is acceptable for speaking with the state authorities" (Zatuln, 2012, p. 205). This way equalized it in rights with other languages on the territory of the country, and in spring 2010 there was a decree abolishing the inherent publication of legislative acts or other regulatory documents in Russian (Sultanov, 2013). However, in 2011, the adoption of an additional bill brought the Russian language back to its previous positions. At present, the state language is Tajik, but the 1994 Constitution of the Republic of Tajikistan (Article 2) recognizes Russian as a means of inter-ethnic communication and allows its use in some cases for official paperwork.

"The President of Tajikistan signed a decree in 2003 on the mandatory introduction of teaching hours for the study of Russian and English for all general education schools in the country" (Kudoyarova, 2010, p. 36). However, the lack of teachers in remote areas and the lack of practical use of foreign language make the implementation of this decree difficult. If a student hears foreign words and expressions only in class and communicates at home and with his peers in his native language, he loses memorization of new words and does not fix the grammar rules. In Tajikistan, there is another notable feature: in everyday domestic life, residents use Tajik or Uzbek, but try to send their children to schools with Russian-language teaching.

During the crisis period of the 1990s, when 70 % of the Russian-speaking population left Tajikistan, contradictory processes of derussification in the education system, office management and industrial sphere resulted in a noticeable decline and backlog of the scientific and industrial sector of the economy. "After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Russian language long time existed without any support on the post-Soviet space that caused signs of irreversible destruction of language in a number of the newly independent states" (Karabalina et al., 2018, p. 119). The beginning of the new century saw the gradual restoration of the Russian-speaking sphere of distribution. This is due to such factors as migration processes, socio-economic ties and public mood in Tajikistan, where many nationalities live (Tajiks, Uzbeks, Kyrgyz, Turkmens and Russians).

In light of the above, the issues of quality teaching of the Russian language, the methodology and content of Russian language classes, the content of Russian language school programs at federal and regional levels are particularly relevant today in Tajikistan. In addition, it is interesting to study the functioning of Russian speech in various areas of public communication.

If we address the practical aspects of the Russian language, we can highlight the following areas:

- authorities publish documents in Tajik, Russian and Uzbek languages;

- various institutions and organizations, enterprises of any form of ownership conduct paperwork and correspondence in any language, depending on the national composition, so it is possible to choose Tajik, Uzbek or Russian.
- citizen may choose the Russian as the language of drawing up the documentary forms issued by the state authorities, post office or other official organizations.

Thus, the State authorities of Tajikistan fully ensure the right of citizens to choose a language for communication, education and office work. It is due to the traditional way of life when many nations have to coexist with each other.

However, the tendency to reduce the Russian-speaking environment is continuing, which depends on the following socio-economic factors: the extinction of the former "Soviet" generation and the resettlement of many young people of working age to other regions.

There are 26 Russian schools in Tajikistan for 2014, 6 of which are in the capital, Dushanbe, and 132 schools have mixed language teaching, including Russian. Approximately 45,000 students are studying in Russian, which is 2.5 % of the total number of students. These figures are 35,000 among the students.

The most important thing is that the Russian language retains equal positions in the sphere of scientific representation, which helps productive communication of scientists from different countries. Since 2005, all candidate and doctoral theses are duplicated in Russian. In the academic environment, the Russian language has a fundamental importance, as the scientific works of Tajik scientists can pass through the All-Russian Higher Attestation Commission (HAC). The scientific conclusion obtained from the Russian Higher Attestation Commission is expert and significantly increases the scientific status of the thesis or article. Since 2017, Tajikistan's scientists have received scientific titles and degrees from the Higher Attestation Commission of the Russian Federation and the Higher Attestation Commission of Tajikistan. The local HAC, established in 2011, accepts works only in Russian or English by order of the Tajik Ministry of Education and Science in 2017.

In this context, a noticeable phenomenon is the Russian-Tajik (Slavic) University (RTSU) in combination with the Russian-Tajik school, operating since 2008 and providing general (9 years) or complete (11 years) secondary education. This educational institution has Russian educational standards, which means that any university in Russia counts for the results of education. In addition, the country has opened such universities with Russian-language teaching as a branch of the Moscow Institute of Steel and Alloys and a branch of Moscow State University. Many other higher education institutions have departments that teach in Russian.

Unfortunately, the lack of Russian language teachers in general education schools does not provide effective implementation of the program to expand the Russian-speaking environment. "The teacher is one of the main knowledge sources, the role of the foreign language teacher is much more important in the language learning process" (Pechinkina & Vepreva, 2020, p. 181). It is due to low wages, to the depopulation of the Russian-speaking population over the past 25–30 years. In addition, many schools, especially those in remote areas, lack Russian language teaching materials.

The fact that there has been a certain convergence of political positions between the leaders of Russia and Tajikistan is a little encouraging. In this regard, the Government of the Russian Federation

plans to build several Russian-speaking schools in the Republic of Tajikistan at the expense of the federal budget, including five educational institutions, whose number should increase in the future. An important factor that significantly increases interest in learning Russian is the training of Tajik students at Russian universities. Russian education is the key to stable employment and dynamic career, which is essential in a prolonged economic crisis. Following the latest speeches of the Russian President, we can recall such promises as accelerated citizenship acquisition by foreign specialists, who will be officially employed in Russia.

The Russian government (Rossotrudnichestvo) quotas the number of foreign students in Russian universities at the expense of budgetary funds. As we can see, the number of quotas for Tajik students is gradually increasing: there were 618 quotas allocated in 2018 and over 630 allocated in 2019–2020.

The influence of the Russian language is widespread in the publishing business, mass media, about 50 periodicals are published in Russian, there are 2 Russian-language TV channels and 2 Russian-language radio stations. Many newspaper and news sites duplicate information in Russian and English. There are many news and analytical materials in Russian: on national and international politics, on business and economy, on culture, on various events (Usmonov, 2014).

According to the government programme, the goals and objectives of Russian language teaching in Tajik schools include the following: pupils should acquire sufficient knowledge and skills of Russian in standard life situations, in social, economic and other areas of communication, and should become familiar with Russian culture and world creative heritage (Kudoyarova, 2010). Of course, this requires knowledge and understanding of vocabulary, grammar, written and oral form of speech.

In the educational system, the Russian language is actually in the position of a foreign language because, firstly, the number of teaching hours has been reduced, schools do not teach Russian literature (as it was in Soviet times), and secondly, there is practically no Russian speaking environment, especially in rural areas. The special difficulty arises from the fact that the classes are not divided into subgroups as required and the teacher works in the classroom with 35 children or more (Guseynova, 2015).

In addition to traditional Russian language classes, Tajik general education schools use the methodology of teaching Russian based on literary works. Teaching Russian language is based on the integration principle based on texts from Russian literature, teachers determine the size of the material on literature themselves, as the program does not specify this aspect.

"The integrated approach gives a multidimensional understanding of the reality and role of a foreign language as an element of culture, motivates learners to master the language and form a humanistic worldview" (Atnabayeva, 2015, p. 135). Teaching different genres of Russian literature helps to learn and understand the beauty of the language, see the practical application of speech, learn certain language skills, remember the rules that students learned in class. It teaches how to apply Russian speech in practical situations, how to understand and express your opinion.

General education schools hold a "Russian Language Day" on Tuesdays each week, during which pupils and teachers communicate only in Russian. More than 200,000 students at secondary and higher education institutions are studying Russian as a mandatory subject according to the acquired profession. There are separate faculties in many higher education institutions in Tajikistan to train philologists, teachers of Russian language and literature, Russian-Tajik translators.

The Russian language is also strengthened through joint cultural, educational, scientific and methodological and other projects (concerts, festivals, days of Russian culture, festivals of Russian literature, visiting seminars and lectures). In 2007, based on a bilateral intergovernmental agreement, Tajikistan declared the Year of the Russian Language. On June 6, Pushkin's birthday, Tajikistan celebrates Russian Language Day as one of the 6 official UN languages.

In 2017, there was a successful project to support Russian language teaching supervised by the Federation Council. In 2017, 29 Russian teachers went to Tajikistan to teach Russian as well as mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology, and in 2018 there were 50 teachers. In 2019, another teaching mission landed, and distributed among the regions of the republic. The Tajik government provides housing for teachers, pays the national average, and the Russian government makes stimulating extra payments.

Higher education cooperation between Moscow and Dushanbe is also developing: 20,000 Tajik students are studying in Russia and another 8,000 are studying in Russian universities or their branches in Tajikistan.

Russia is a strategically important partner for Tajikistan in international relations, politics and economics, science and culture. The presence of labour migrants on Russian territory and the constant flow of foreign currency from their part allow maintaining stable, long-term relations between countries. "The problem of migration not only remains on the agenda, but is becoming more and more pressing... we should understand that teaching Russian, like any other language in this situation, has a positive effect" (Shaklein, 2014, p. 59). The Russian language plays a huge role in strengthening inter-ethnic relations in Tajikistan and beyond.

## 7. Conclusion

The study of Russian in Tajikistan continues to play a crucial role. While the majority of professional fields use Russian, the level of Russian language proficiency in the Republic is decreasing. Like in the times of the Soviet Union, the Russian language remains in the minds of the inhabitants as a tool that provides a perspective for career growth. The migration of Tajik youth to the Russian Federation establishes the importance of knowledge of the Russian language for people who intend to live, work and study in Russia.

The development of the Russian language in RT may be facilitated by such events as:

- increasing the hours of Russian language teaching in Tajik-speaking schools;
- improving the teacher training of the Russian language.
- ensuring employment for Russian-speaking students in Tajikistan.

Today, the Russian language in Tajikistan is developing dynamically, it is quite firmly rooted in urban conditions and the demand for Russian-speaking education is high. However, the meaning of the Russian language is inferior to the Soviet period. Russian remains the language of inter-ethnic communication in Tajikistan and serves mainly in areas where it has gained scientific and practical relevance.

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