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I would like to speak on the language issue in modern Belarus. An American linguist Benjamin Lee Whorf once said "We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native language" [2] stressing the importance of the latter. The language is the most cherished treasure of every state and nation. Everything begins from the mother tongue – culture, traditions and customs. When the language dies, the people and the nation die as well.

Let us first turn to the Republic of Belarus census for the year 2009 [1] and see the number of Belarusian citizens speaking the Russian and Belarusian languages and which of them they consider their mother tongue.

4,841,319 people stated Belarusian as their native language and so did 217,015 representatives of other nations (including 171,287 Poles), which totals 53.22 % of the country's population. Besides, 1,009,935 of those classifying themselves as Belarusians indicated Belarusian as the second language they are fluent at and so did 271,778 representatives of other nations (including 181,091 Russians), which totals 13.49 % of the country's population. Thus, in the year 2009 5,058,334 Belarusian citizens named Belarusian their native language, while another 1,281,713 people mastered it as their second language, which amounted to 6,340,047 fluent speakers of Belarusian. In spite of the fact that two thirds of the country's population claim proficiency in the Belarusian language, the number of those who stated that they speak Belarusian at home amounted to 2,073,853 people defining themselves as Belarusians and 153,271 – as other nationalities (including 120,378 Poles), which totals 23.43 % of the country's population. This means that nearly two thirds of the people proficient in Belarusian do not use it at home.

Certain sociological research aimed at defining the language Belarusians use in their everyday life reveal that 34 % of Belarusians claim language proficiency, but only about 6 % of them declare continuous use of the Belarusian language, almost 74 % are mainly Russian-speakers, and 21 % do not use Belarusian altogether.

In the year 2010 the government of the country declared their plans for extending the use of the Belarusian language.

There is a social stratum in modern Belarus made up of young people for whom the language is a tool for demonstrating their "life style" and uniqueness, based not only on their personality, but also on the cultural tradition. At first such use of the Belarusian language resembles consumers' tendency to choose "brand" clothes or other goods, increasing our "value". Still, the matter is quite different. To use the Belarusian language as a "value index" you will have to put a lot of effort to at least keep overcoming the amazement of those who have been speaking Russian since birth. Thus, modern youth feel too shy to speak Belarusian, or even afraid to be misunderstood by their peers. The wish to speak Belarusian today is a wish to be independent, i.e. determine their ways without looking back on the fear of being regarded as "language outcast" by the others.

Thus, in the year 2009 Belarusian was the native language of 53% Belarusian citizens, besides, 14% mastered Belarusian as their second language which totalled 67% people proficient in Belarusian but not using it in their everyday life.

The 2009 census shows that the majority of Belarusians know their language but fail to speak it, which adversely influences Belarusian culture and the attitudes towards it from the neighbouring countries and the global community in general as every people should speak their own language and not anybody else's.

What measures shall be taken for the majority of Belarusian to start speaking their title language?

To begin with, this process is quite a lengthy one so it shall be introduced gradually, starting from the very beginning, from pre-school and family education.

Secondly, the Belarusian language shall cover all spheres of social life.

Then, it would be a good idea to increase the number of schools where all subjects are taught in Belarusian.

Lastly, I would appreciate the possibility to study the university disciplines in Belarusian language as well regardless of the department.

We cannot but mention the numerous steps taken in this direction. There are a number of newspapers and magazines published in Belarusian (namely "Golas Razdimy", "Zviazda", "Nasha Niva", "Viasiolka" etc), numerous TV and radio programmes are broadcast in Belarusian ("Good Morning, Belarus", "Gaspadar", "Ahead to the Past", "Palessky Pachastunak", "Skarbnitsa", "Karani" etc.).

Literature references

1. Перепись населения – 2009: Выходные регламентные таблицы [Электронный ресурс]. – 2010. – Режим доступа: <http://belstat.gov.by/homep/ru/perepic/2009/razdel5.php>. – Дата доступа: 10.02.2012.
2. Quotations Book – The Home of Famous Quotes [Electronic resource]. – Mode of access: <http://quotationsbook.com/quote/22444/> – Date of access: 04.02.2012.