

THE PROBLEM OF BELARUSIAN LANGUAGE

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There is no doubt that language is the soul of nation. So Belarus may seem to be a lucky country: two languages – two souls. Do you agree?

Taking into account existing bilingualism [1] in Belarus it is just definitely unfair that Belarusian is pushed out of public life.

What we really can observe is that the Russian language resumes formal role of the prevalent language of communication; enjoys the preferential treatment by Belarus' current authorities.

In practice, in many cases when a Belarusian wishes to use his native language while dealing with various bureaucratic procedures, he/she encounters dozens of insurmountable problems (lack of forms in Belarusian, etc.), and is eventually advised to use Russian, since it's one of the country's official languages.

Beginning with the Russian language on the state-run TV and radio, and ending with the exclusively Russian dubbing of foreign films, the citizen very rarely hears Belarusian – his native language.

In modern supermarkets, one is greeted only in Russian, and all signs describing merchandise are in Russian [2].

Books in Belarusian are not popular. Not many artists want to use it in their works.

You could tell me, that nowadays children learn Belarusian at schools and you are right. But I know it for sure that even teachers at school make concessions to children so that you can «learn and forget».

These days only 2% of children in Minsk attend a Belarusian-speaking school. In the whole country, only 19% of pupils are taught in Belarusian. These numbers have decreased significantly since 2001 and it reveals that there is no clear tendency towards promotion of the Belarusian language [3].

Most Belarusian city dwellers prefer not to communicate in their native language in public places.

But at the same time there are some light sides. At least the street signs in the cities and the road signs in the countryside are written in Belarusian. It is used in the sphere of tourism too. And deeply in their souls Belarusians are proud of their native language. It is viewed when we are celebrating some great holidays or when we are cooking a course of our national cuisine or just while we are communicating informally.

Anyway Belarusian is worth to be used in everyday life. But all changes which could improve the situation should be made step by step.

Linguists say that Belarusian is a very melodic and gentle language and is similar to Ukrainian and Italian.

Besides the literary norm, there exist two main dialects of the Belarusian language, the North-Eastern and the South-Western. In addition, there exist the transitional Middle Belarusian dialect group and the separate West Palyesian dialect group. The North-Eastern and the South-Western dialects are separated by a hypothetical line Ashmyany–Minsk–Babruysk–Homyel, with the area of the Middle Belarusian dialect group placed on and along this line. These dialects are also our national heritage and we should appreciate it [4].

However, there seems to be no serious intention to create a Belarusian-speaking environment. In order to prevent Belarusian from disappearing, more than a small number of activists is needed. A language lives through its speakers. It must come naturally to the Belarusians to speak their beautiful language. The more people speak it – the more often it will be heard in the streets. And one day, people will stop turning their heads in astonishment when they hear a foreigner speaking Belarusian in the streets.

Nation can't be imagined without its native language.

References

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