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M. Ashirimbetova

MA, senior lecturer, Suleyman Demirel university, Kazakhstan, Almaty

E-mail: ashirimbetova.madina@sdu.edu.kz

Culture as reflected in Kazakh mentality

The communicative behavior research gained importance in Kazakhstani linguistics in the first decade of the XXI century. Interest towards the national history, customs and traditions was triggered by intensification of self-conscience of Kazakh people and expanding international relations within and outside the country. At the same time historical background as forcible sedentarization of nomads and following collectivization of economy which ruined traditional nomadic lifestyle; industrialization and urbanization of Kazakhstan, numerous migrations of the different cultural and linguistic backgrounds begot vigorous modernization processes. The author of the article discusses the aspect of national influence upon communicative behavior of the nation and some of the traditions extinct and preserved in the modern Kazakh society like the principle of seniority, hospitality, and others, historical conditions of appearance of the traditions and explains national communicative behavior peculiarities connected to these.

Keywords: national peculiarities, Kazakh society, principle of seniority, younger generation, traditional, etiquette.

М. Аширимбетова

Қазақ менталитетіндегі мәдениеттің бейнеленуі

Коммуникативтік мінез-құлқының зерттеулері Қазақстан тіл білімінде жиырма бірінші ғасырдың бірінші он жылдығында өзектілігін тапты. Осы уақыттан бастап қазақ халқының сана-сезімінің нығаюы мен халықаралық қарым қатынастардың өсуіне байланысты ұлттың тарихына, дәстүрлері мен әдет-ғұрыптарына қызығушылық өсе бастады. Сонымен бірге ауыл шаруашылығын ұжымдастыру, [индустрияландыру](#), қалалану, түрлі мәдени және тілдік мұра иегерлердің көп сандық миграция сияқты түрлі тарихи алғышарттар қуатты жаңғырту үдерістерді туғызды. Мақаланың авторы коммуникативтік мінез-құлқының ұлттық аспектіні, қазақ халқының ағалық қағидалары, қонақжайлылығы сияқты кейбір әдет ғұрыптарды талқылайды. Сонымен бірге ұлттық мәдениет өзгешеліктері пайда болуының алғышарттарын және олардың қазақ менталитетінде бейнеленуіне назар аударады.

Түйін сөздер: ұлттық өзгешеліктері, қазақ қоғамы, ағалық қағидалары, жас ұрпағы, дәстүрлі, этикет.

М. Аширимбетова

Отражение культуры в казахском менталитете

Исследования коммуникативного поведения приобрели актуальность в Казахстане в первой декаде 21 века. Интерес к роли национальной истории, традициям и обычаям, а так же их отражение в лингвистике возросли в связи с интенсификацией самосознания казахского народа и растущих международных отношений внутри и за пределами страны. Так же различные исторические предпосылки как насильственная седентаризация и последующая коллективизация экономики, разрушившие традиционный кочевнический быт, индустриализация и урбанизация Казахстана, многочисленные миграции представителей различных культурных и языковых наследий, явились причиной мощных процессов модернизации. Автор статьи обсуждает отражение национального аспекта в коммуникативном поведении и некоторые из традиций казахского народа, такие как принцип старшинства, гостеприимство и другие, объясняя исторические предпосылки возникновения особенностей национальной культуры и её отражение в казахском менталитете.

Ключевые слова: национальные особенности, казахское общество, принцип старшинства, молодое поколение, традиционный, этикет.

Kazakhstan as one of the countries of former Soviet bloc was forced to undergo the expansionist policy of the Russian Empire, 'barbarian Soviet treatment and ethnocide' [1, 545], forced sedentarization, collectivization, artificial starvation, and many more. The XX century for Kazakh people was the century of the great changes conditioned by several factors. Forcible sedentarization of nomads and following collectivization of economy ruined nomadic lifestyle; industrialization and urbanization of Kazakhstan, numerous migrations

of the representatives of nationalities of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds begot vigorous modernization processes. This consequently changed basic etiquette principles and transformed traditional communicative behavior standards. During the Soviet period, communicative behavior typical for Russian culture penetrated into communicative behavior of the representatives of all the USSR countries. Our country was not an exception.

Today, with the third decade of existence of independent Kazakhstan there appeared a necessity

in retrieval in the national memory of cultural roots and backgrounds. This is the country with plentiful historical and cultural background rooting in ancient times.

Communicative behavior research gained importance in Kazakhstani linguistics in the first decade of the XXI century with intensification of international relations in the country. Familiarity with the traditions and norms of behavior and etiquette allows a thorough understanding of psychology and mentality of Kazakhs and optimizing problems of international communication. Thus, growth of national self-consciousness and actualization of the national identity among Kazakh people can be noticed in all the fields and spheres of social life and science. From the one hand, compliance with the etiquette allows a person to feel comfortable in any situation of everyday communication, and from the other, respect to one's own national norms and standards stipulate tolerance towards culture of other people. Research of Kazakh communicative behavior will assist optimization of communication between representatives of the nation and international communication as well.

Communication is the exchange of encoded data between the subjects of communication as the communicant possesses a common national and cultural background. On this stage people not just exchange data, but they also try to work out a common meaning of the message sent and received. In this case the information is not only accepted, but also understood. In order for this process to be successful, people have to find a 'common tongue'.

The model of communicative process includes 5 elements [2]:

WHO (transmits the message)	–
Communicator	
WHAT (is transmitted)	–
Message (text)	
HOW (the transfer is established)	–
Channel	
WHO (the message is addressed to)	–
Auditorium	
WITH WHICH EFFECT	–
Effectiveness	

Interactive aspect consists of interaction organization between communicating individuals. This includes characteristics of the communication components connected to the organization of their mutual activity. There exist two types of interaction: cooperation (joint coordination of the subjects of communication) and competition (usually

conflict). And perceptive aspect is the process of perception and mutual cognition of the communicating individuals and establishment of mutual understanding. All the three aspects are connected, interrelated and compose the communication process.

In order for the process of communication to flow successfully, there have to be several stages:

- Contact setting (acquaintance)
- Orientation in a communicative situation, realizing of what is happening, pausing
- Discussion of the problem
- Problem solution
- The conclusion of the contract [3]

The term communicative behavior is a range of standards and traditions of communication of people. National communicative behavior [4, 20] is a range of standards and traditions of communication of a certain lingua cultural community. Theoretically, there are three types of communicative behavior: national, group and personal. The aim of the modern linguists who research intercultural linguistics and communication is to form scientific foundation and conceptions about national communicative behavior as a cultural component. Furthermore, there need to be terminological definitions compiled, methodology, techniques and models worked out to describe communicative behavior.

There are four aspects of communicative behavior: general cultural, group, situational and individual norms. General cultural norms of communicative behavior are typical of the whole lingua cultural community and reflect set etiquette standards. They concern general situations regardless of the communication sphere, age, status, etc. these are attracting attention, greeting, addressing, apologizing, telephoning, congratulations, etc. These differ from nation to nation. For example, when greeting Americans always smile. Kazakhs, however, not necessarily smile when greet somebody. Or when addressing Kazakh people try to change the tone to respectfully kindred level. Situational norms are noticed when communication is limited by the certain extra linguistic situation. There exist various kinds of limitations, for example, by status. There are two types of status limitations: vertical (superior – inferior); and horizontal (equal – equal). Limitations also vary and carry national characteristics. For example, in Kazakh culture the relations between elder generation and the younger generation are vertical. Group norms reflect specifics of communication, fixed in the culture for certain professional, gender, social, age, and etc.

groups. Individual norms of communication reflect individual culture and communicative experience of an individual and personal deflection of general cultural and situational norms in linguistic persona.

Considering modern Kazakh culture we can say that it is a representation of a unity of modernized and traditional characteristics. It is known that traditional and modernized cultures are based on different principles and set different objectives to be achieved. Flexibility and mobility of modernized culture provide its possessors a number of advantages in achieving personal aims and adaptation to altered conditions. While traditional culture presents its representative definite values, behavioral patterns, and introduces order and stability in it, thus, fulfilling value-oriented and protective functions more efficiently. This contributes to a succession of generations. Overall, modern Kazakh culture is a set of traditions gradually transformed by the influence of modernization processes towards definite unification and simplification. Along with it, the globalization processes – like transformation of traditional culture, modernization, Europeanization and moderate unitization of everyday life – are taking place in the cities and urban areas of Kazakhstan. Democratization of relationships between the representatives of the opposite gender, different age and social groups results in alteration of traditional etiquette principles. Expressions of greeting, postures and gestures symbolizing respect are simplified, and there appear adopted European behavioral standards regulating communication between a woman and man. For example, in the thirties of the XX century there was a tradition when a Kazakh woman greeted a man with a slight bow, kneeling on her left knee, crossing both hands on her right knee with a slight bow of her head. Today in the urban areas of Northern and Eastern Kazakhstan this type of greeting is not used. It preserved in the Southern region of the country as a little imitation of the posture.

The concept of hospitality among nomadic peoples, especially Kazakhs was one of most reliable ways of preserving and strengthening the inner connections of social unity. Forms of greeting, proxemics characteristics depended to a certain degree from socio-demographic, relation degree, residence (close / faraway), gender and age characteristics of the guest.

Traditional hospitality, considered as concept of hospitality in the modern culture, can be attributed to a number of the basic constants defining the essence of Kazakh mentality. The concept of

hospitality is based on mythological notion that the forefather of all Kazakhs divided his fortune into four parts – he gave the three parts to his three sons. Each son later founded a separate zhuz (kz. – жүз – clan, kin) (Kazakhs have an inner system of separation – Zhuz system). He left the fourth share of his fortune as a common part destined for regalement and guests. It is a great obliquity among Kazakhs when a host does not or does not want to welcome a guest with proper honor. In a traditional Kazakh culture any wayfarer, stopped at any house could say: ‘Мен Құдай қонақпын’ (lit. ‘I am the guest sent by the Creator’) and the host was obliged to allow the guest their house, food and security [5, 123].

Hospitality etiquette in the modern Kazakh society underwent considerable transformation. Today, countryside traditions vary greatly from those in the city. For example, in the cities people do not distinguish numerous categories of guests – they are only divided into ‘invited’ and ‘uninvited’ (‘sent by the Creator’). Furthermore, in the city a stranger can be denied shelter, the guests can be treated only tea with sweet, but not a lavish meal. A casual guest doesn’t stay for a long period of time: in the country today the maximum period one can stay is three days. The aim of the visit is usually asked at once, without biding their time for three days, as it was done in the past. In urban areas and cities guests usually give advance notice about their visit and sometimes bring gifts to the hosts. However, some traditions are preserved both in the country as well as in the cities – a guest, for example, cannot leave a house without having tasted the meal – at least one bit.

Furthermore, there is no reference to communicant’s autonomy and personal zone Kazaks usually do not avoid making effect on their communicant. This refers to requests and imperatives. When inviting somebody to their place Kazakh people usually point out their own interest in it (e.g. they say *Келіңіз, сізді қуана-қуана күтеміз* – lit. *We’ll be happy to welcome you again*). And an invitation to their place plays a great role for Kazakh people, because this reflects the general attitude to guests and national hospitality. Kazakhs are always ready to welcome guests. This was also conditioned historically – the conditions of living implied long distances and spaces between one aul (аул – lit. settlement, village) and another, and when a person was coming from the neighboring aul that meant that he was hungry and thirsty after a long way. That is why Kazakh people treated guests with special respect and honor and put on dastarkhan

(lit. – table) the best food they had. And usually the guest was telling the news from the place he was coming. Dastarkhan for Kazakh people was more than a table and food consuming – it imposed communication and information exchange between people. The primary function of dastarkhan still remains unchanged – today Kazakhs get together to exchange news about certain social medium like relatives, friends, fellow-countrymen, fellow-townsmen or fellow-villagers. It is also accepted as a means for building closer and better relationships and enlivening sibling connections. Now among the representatives of the middle generation of Kazakhs show great interest towards national customs and traditions. This bears return and revival of Kazakh national traditions in the modern Kazakh society.

Along with hospitality etiquette attitude towards older people in Kazakh society also plays a great role. Kazakhs tend to comply with politeness etiquette when communicating with elderly people using positive politeness strategies [6]. This refers to the steadfast law of Kazakh life reflected in constant respect to the forefathers and ancestors. An elderly person has always been a source of wisdom. In the past elderly Kazakhs were accepted and were more experienced, had wider outlook, and were able to help finding a solution for any situation. Elderly people were obliged and happy to help the younger generation. Younger people were viewed as their traces left after them. Younger people were supposed to help elder with petty life problems. There is a saying *Ағасы бардың жағасы бар, інісі бардың тынысы бар* (*If one has an elder brother they have a person caring for them, if one has a younger brother they will not have minor problems – their life will be calm*). The tradition is preserved in the modern Kazakh society, but not demonstrated in official communication. This expressed in communication in the following ways: a younger person is the first to greet the older one, when greeting the younger person stands up when greeting the older. The oldest is the first to start the meal and the talk. When dividing prey after a hunt (kz. – оlja) – elderly people were the first to take their share; when entering a house – elderly people were always given turn to enter first, and when seating the most respected place in the house – төп – was given to the eldest and thus the most respected guests. Today the *principle of seniority* retained in all the communicative situations (except for the prey, of course). There still exist special ways of expressing respect towards elderly people in the society like the ways of greeting, the ways of

addressing, etc., prescribed by etiquette. In any situation youth have to render attention and the ability to be helpful. When talking to the elder person younger people must not be holding their hands in their pockets, chewing a gum, smoking a cigarette or drinking a spirit. The speech and laughter of younger people in the presence of an elderly person must not be very loud, and the questions of the elder person should be answered modestly. The respect for the elderly people can be noticed in their special place as well (in the center of the room, higher, further from the entrance, etc.). And the most respected places – төп (lit. center) – is usually offered to the eldest member of the family and the younger members cannot pretend to that place.

A steppe law which fostered the previous peculiarity of Kazakh national communicative behavior was knowledge of one's pedigree. This also served as a guarantee of life in Kazakh steppe – it helped to communicate with the people one met, to get a shelter in auls and to feel at ease and comfortable anywhere a person was. Because there was always a possibility that someone they met could be their relative, close or distant, by any branch or generation. The people in the steppe were not afraid of strangers, and every person was treated like a brother, like a blood relative. Otherwise, it would be impossible to inhabit, survive and prosper on the colossal area Kazakhs inhabited. That is why the saying 'Қарға тамырлы қазақ' ('All Kazakhs are the pulli of one nest') was very popular among people throughout centuries. The knowledge of kindred relations among Kazakhs was worldly norm, gradually grew into moral-ethnic criterion. Kazakhs didn't and do not marry to a relative to the seventh generation and if a person violated this law, it was accepted as crime damaging biologic nature outraging moral ideals of people. Thus, nomadic habitat bore unique mechanism providing ethno-biological and ethno-cultural unity – knowledge of ancestors to the seventh generation ('Жері Ата' – lit. 'Seven Grandfathers'). Genealogy for a Kazakh is not only the list of names on a family-tree. The historic concept of oral genealogies reflects the abundant spectrum of relational interconnections in the aggregate of general national solidarity. This is a one more institute of nomadic lifestyle, invaluable achievement of the ethnos cumulated throughout centuries. The pedigree concentrates philosophical, economic, esthetic behavioristic, sacral motives and norms of human communication. All the material and spiritual aspects of life are governed by etiquette of inter-

relational connections. Thus, the structure can be considered as a unique phenomenon of nomadic civilization.

In-family structure was also one of the index characteristics of nomadic lifestyle. Thus, when starting a conversation with a stranger Kazakhs started with naming their relatives. Kazakhs divide all relatives into three groups being guided by considerations that a person as a social subject is connected first of all to three zhurts (kz. жұрт – lit. people): own zhurt – father’s relatives; nagashi zhurt (kz. нағашы жұрт) – mother’s relatives; kaiyn zhurt (kz. қайын жұрт) – wife’s or husband’s relatives. The names of the own zhurt (clan): әке (father), бел бала (son), немере (grandson), шөбере (great-grandson), шөпшек (great-great-grandson), немене (great-great-great grandson), жүрежат (great-great-great-great grandson). These are the seven generations. Further – great baba (ұлы баба – lit. great-greatgrandfather), baba (баба), ата (ата- grandfather), azhe (әже – grandmother), koke (көке – uncle), sheshe (шеше – mother), ogei sheshe (өгей шеше – stepmother), toqal sheshe (тоқал шеше – the second wife of father), апа (апа – mother), agha (аға – elder brother), tate (тәте-aunt), арке (әпке – sister), ini (іні – younger brother), қарындас (қарындас – younger sister), ul (ұл-son), қыз (қыз – daughter), nemere ini (немере іні- grandnephew), nemere қарындас (немере қарындас – grandniece), shobere ini (шөбере іні – great-grandnephew), shobere қарындас (шөбере қарындас – great-granddaughter), etc. And these are the relatives from father’s side. There are also names for the relatives from the mother’s side, names for matrimonial relations. All in all there are 90 main names of the close relatives. Naming relatives of their communicant Kazakh people start titling from themselves. This is why a Kazakh does not feel like a stranger in any society being sure that among their communicants there will be at least one close or faraway relative from one of the titled groups or subgroups. If there is no one, there will be a relative from their zhuz – the biggest (after ethnic) identity index among Kazakh people. There exist other more faraway connections apart from these clans – branches of nieces and nephews, fathers of the sons-in-law, and non-clan connections – according to the rituals, combat kinship, peaceful brotherhood, etc. – the ones equally important as

blood relations. This was one more physical and psychological adaptation security mechanism on boundless nomadic areas [7, 230].

The vigor of Kazakh in-family relations can be found in the communicative tactics of convergence. Kazakh people tend to shorten the distance between communicants by expressing their sympathy, benevolence, disposition and solidarity towards the communicant. In both, formal and informal, verbal communication Kazakh people tend to transfer communication to a more relative-like stage. Kazakhs use the names of relatives to address to their communicants (for example, the word ‘ағай’ is usually addressed to a man who is older than the aggressor, the words ‘апай’ and ‘әпке’ (lit. ‘sister’) are usually addressed to a woman of an older age than the addressor. These strategies can also be noticed in communication between older and younger people. For example, ‘қарындас’ (lit. ‘little sister’) – is usually used by men to a woman who is younger than the aggressor, ‘бауырым’ (lit. ‘younger brother’) – is also usually used by men to men who are younger than the aggressor, the word ‘балам’ (lit. sonny) is usually used by women to men who are twice younger than they are, so that they could be their sons), қызым (affectionate-diminutive from daughter) – by women for women (girls) who are twice younger than they are, so that they could be their daughters). These words can be used when addressing strangers, as well as two familiar people to whom the addressor wants to demonstrate their family-like or relative-like relationship. When communicating to a person whose status is higher than the status of the addressor or Kazakh people tend to add to the first syllable of the addressee’s name a polite ending (for example, Бауыржан Серікұлы (first name and second name) – Баке (first syllable of a first name added an affectionate-diminutive ending). When communicating informally and addressing to children Kazakh people usually make-up endearing nicknames which can be a shortening of the original name (for example – Дәулет (full first name) – Дәкөш (the first syllable of the first name added an affectionate-diminutive ending), etc.) or names of baby animals or birds (for example, ботақаным (lit. ‘my colt’ affectionate-diminutive), құлыншағым (lit. ‘my foal’ – affectionate-diminutive), балапаным (lit. ‘my poult’ affectionate-diminutive), etc.)

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