# Conflictsogenic Factors of The Language Situation in The Republic of The Volga and The Urals (Frame Analysis)

## By

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## Abstract

Federalism in the Russian Federation provides for the existence of constitutional foundations for the existence of bi- and multilingualism in the regions of the country. The formation of a full-fledged multilingualism regime faces a number of difficulties. Due to the differences between the republics of Russia, these difficulties are also different. These include both actual educational problems, such as teaching and methodological support of languages, and the problems of a purely political nature associated with the manifestation of nationalism and discrimination on the basis of language. A large, three-year study by a group of scholars from Kazan Federal University is devoted to the factors of conflict potential of the language situation and the language policies in the republics of the Volga and Ural regions of the Russian Federation. Part of this study is presented in this publication. It is devoted to the analysis of the of the frame analysis results of the media space of the six republics of the Volga and Ural regions (the Republic of Mari El, the Chuvash Republic, the Republic of Bashkortostan, the Republic of Tatarstan, the Republic of Mordovia, the Udmurt Republic) for the presence of language conflictogenic factors in it. A distinctive feature of the study is the interdisciplinarity of the analysis methodology based on conflictology audit. This methodology was developed at the Department of Conflictology of Kazan Federal University in 2019, tested and is applied successfully in the field of applied research by Kazan scientists.

**Key words**: conflict potential factors, language situation, Volga region, Ural region, frame analysis.

# 1 Introduction

The presented publication is the result of the media space frame analysis as part of the of an interdisciplinary project implementation of fundamental and applied scientific research program in the direction of "Ethnic-cultural diversity of Russian society and the strengthening of all-Russian identity" according to the state task for 2020-2022 on the topic "Conflictogenic factors in the field of language and language policy in the republics of the Volga and Urals: identification, forecasting technology and conflict prevention." The frame analysis was carried out during the period of September-December 2021 in order to expand the understanding of the semantics of national language discourse in the public opinion of the Volga and Ural region republics.

The study was conducted for six (6) national republics of the Volga and Ural regions. These regions included the following republics of the Russian Federation: the Republic of Mari El, the Chuvash Republic, the Republic of Bashkortostan, the Republic of Tatarstan, the Republic of Mordovia, and the Udmurt Republic.

# 2 Methods

The research methodology is based on the conflict theory by L. Kozer [1], which focuses on the positive social content of a conflict and stimulates the development of social systems through creativity renewal; the concept of collective action, which explains the genesis of ethnopolitical conflicts through the desire of certain political groups to possess power through ethnic (including linguistic, confessional and cultural) mobilization on the basis of collective interests, including the formation and maintenance of group identity (E. Azar [2]); socio-psychological theory of ethnic conflict (D. Horowitz [3]), highlighting the socio-psychological and institutional mechanisms of behavior in the dynamics of ethnic conflict; sociolinguistic paradigm that conceptualizes the concepts of "language policy" and "language territorial regime" that determine the relationship between language and ethnic mobilization (J. Fishman [4], V.M. Alpatov [5], M. Guboglo [6], N. Borisova [7] [8] and others [9] [10]).

The research methodology is based on an interdisciplinary approach to the situation evaluation and analysis within the framework of the set problem. It is based on qualitative methods for empirical data collection. The main technology for conflict factor evaluation (the objects under study) is a conflict audit. The technology is the marker analysis of conflict factor identification in the process of focus group conduct, expert in-depth surveys and the frame analysis of the surveyed region media space.

The development of technologies for conflict prediction and prevention is carried out on the basis of conflictological audit material analysis, the secondary analysis of the surveyed region statistical data and the frame analysis of Internet resources of all possible regional and federal institutions for conflict resolution in the field of language policy. This combination of methods makes it possible to observe the principle of triangulation when they achieve the relevance of empirical data.

A frame analysis of regional and federal institutions for conflict resolution (ICR) in the field of language policy is also carried out separately for each region. Based on this material, a comparative analysis of the regions is given with the identification of general trends, specifics and differences in locations during the activities of federal and regional ICR. The correlation

between the semantics of frames and the marker component of the conflictological audit is determined.

As the part of the frame analysis, 151 sources were analyzed. These are the messages from the actors of 33 groups posted on the Internet, including: the representatives / the heads of ministries of education, the representatives of institutions for the preservation and development of the native / state / national language, the representatives / the heads of educational institutions / the directors of schools, public opinion leaders (POLs) of Russian communities, the POLs of national communities, national artists), and 5574 comments on the messages for three conditional periods: before 2017, in 2017, and after 2017.

The main hypotheses in the analysis were the following theses:

• Conflict frames are built mainly around the point of an incident - the speeches by V.V. Putin at the Security Council in Yoshkar-Ola in 2017. A characteristic feature of the formation and implementation of conflict frames is their medium urgency.
• The frame structure and its semantics of the surveyed regions has its own characteristics and differences.
• The main techniques for a conflict-free frame development are the following ones: hushing up the problem, highlighting the situation as a problem in the field of education, teaching methods, positioning of collective responsibility for the preservation and development of languages, fixation of voluntariness principle in language learning, compliance (legitimate activity through compliance) with the law.

## 3 Results And Discussion

The survey was conducted within three specified time frames: before 2017, in 2017, and after 2017. The bifurcation point was the speech of the Russian Federation President at the Security Council in Yoshkar-Ola in 2017. The frames of government bodies, educational institutions, LOM representatives from the Russian ethnic group and the national ethnic groups of the regions were singled out. Let us describe the results of frame analysis for each region under study.

Republic of Bashkortostan. In general, a conflict-free frame from the representatives of the Ministry of Education dominates at the official level throughout the entire period, the problem of language is positioned as a problem of language in the field of education, teaching methods, and strict observance of formalities. The opportunities for comments are limited, but where they appear, there is also a conflict frame from ordinary members of society. The conflict-free frame set by the Ministry of Education is also supported in the professional environment, where the problem of languages is considered only as a problem of the educational process. The experts, in turn, condemn forced language teaching and reveal a conflict frame, pointing out that the problem has been driven under the carpet, it has not been resolved, and all parties continue to consider themselves disadvantaged.

Thus, throughout the entire period, the problem is hushed up on the part of school principals and thus an attempt is made to form a conflict-free official frame. The comments on publications reveal the presence of a real conflict frame. The presence of a conflict, the frame of the Bashkir language forced imposition can be found in rare publications that go beyond the boundaries of the republic.

2017 became a milestone, after which there was a change in the main frame from a conflict one to a conflict-free among the Russian activists in the Republic of Bashkortostan. Bashkir activists position the problem of language within the framework of the conflict frame, with the intensity increase in 2017 and some weakening after 2017. The frame is further sharpened by the position of Tatar activists regarding the situation with the Tatar language in Bashkortostan. The artists of Bashkortostan form a non-conflict frame quite successfully, but in the comments reveal the conflict nature of the language situation in the republic - there is a conflict frame.

Mari El Republic. Frame of July 2017 - the year of V.V. Putin's speech at the Security Council in Yoshkar-Ola - the frame of a spiral of silence, when "everything is already clear." The frame has clear predicates: "state language", "linguistic well-being through the family", "preservation of the native language". After July 2017, the republic's media space is silent about the attitude of the Ministry towards the Mari language until 2021. 2021 forms a stable frame of "mother tongue learning". The frame dynamics of the official position of the Ministry of Education and Science of Mari El: the frame of silence spiral - the frame of "native language learning".

The dynamics of the position frame by the representative of the institute for the preservation and development of the native / state / national language of the constituent entity of the Russian Federation: "modernization of the Mari language" - "the spiral of silence" - "modernization of the Mari language".

The dynamics of the representative's frame - the heads of educational institutions / principal of the school: "spiral of silence" - "there are no conflicts in our school."

The dynamics of POLs frame of the national community: the frame "you to me, and I to you" is a radicalized conflict frame of "Mariness". National artists of the republic form the frame of "language in art". The frame is apolitical, conflict-free, vague, and not commented by the public. The dynamics of the frame of chats/comments of the parent communities: the frame "Cheremis persecution by the Russian tsars" - the frame of "joining the POLs" - the frame of "guilty Varangians".

Udmurt republic. At the official level, after 217, there is a transition from hushing up the problem to placing it in a non-conflict frame and positioning the situation with languages as a complex issue. In general, the goals and results of the institute activities are not communicated to the general public, and the formation of a frame of "useless institutions for the language" is quite likely, and the conflict-free frame set by the Ministry of Education of Udmurtia is also supported in a professional environment where the problem of languages is considered only as a problem of the education process.

The official position of school principals in Udmurtia is located in a conflict-free frame throughout the entire period, while the unofficial interpretation of the language situation in the republic, given by the comments on messages, forms a conflict frame. Udmurt activists in the republic form a conflict frame throughout the entire period (with the exception of the alternative after 2017), while Russian activists form a conflict-free frame of the language situation in the republic. In general, the artists of Udmurtia form a uniquely conflict-free frame, taking on part of the responsibility for the language preservation. There are no comments on the message, as well as the opportunity to leave feedback.

Chuvash Republic. The dynamics of the official position frame of the Ministry of Education and Youth Policy of the CR can be represented schematically: a conflict-free frame - a conflict frame "a political conflict between the Russian and Chuvash languages" - position surrender frame (defensive) / respectful - conflict-free frame (through the predictor "Chuvash as the state language."

The change of frame naturally logically caused the social tension increase in the republic during a certain period of 2017-2018, subsequently forming a stable opposition group of moderate nationalists.

The dynamics of the representative's position frame from the institute for the preservation and development of the native / state / national language of the RF constituent entity: the frame of legitimacy - a conflict-free frame through the "Chuvash language" predictor - the frame of "political weather vane". The dynamics of the representative's frame of the heads of educational institutions / head of school: "useless institution of language" - "spiral of silence". The frame of the POLs of the Russian community is rapidly transforming into a conflicting "protection from the forced study of the Chuvash language". The conflict frame with political overtones form the POLs from the national community of the republic.

The dynamics of the POLs frame of the national community of the CR: "a conflict frame with political overtones" - "surrendering language positions" - "we will not let the language situation be shaken up" and "everyone should teach" - the frame "of the national opposition split" - the frame "of the problem significance reduction" - a political conflict frame. The dynamics of the national artist POLs frame: "native Chuvash language" - "spiral of silence" - "native is better seen from a distance." The frame of chats/comments dynamics of parental communities: the frames of "non-participation" and "going personal" - the frame of Russification - the frame of "attack and defense of the Chuvash language".

The Republic of Mordovia. The frame of the Ministry of Education and the Minister position is formed in the turning year 2017. This is the "Ministry Guilt Frame". After 2017, there is a "spiral of silence frame". The dynamics of the representative's position frame of the institute for the preservation and development of the native / state / national language of the constituent entity of the Russian Federation: the frame of a "large international scientific center" is a "spiral of silence". The dynamics of the representative's frame of educational institution heads / principal of the school: a "justification frame" has been formed. Among the activists from the Russian community, only the journalistic community appears in the media space of Mordovia in 2017. Surprisingly, his frame position is "social responsibility".

Dynamics of POLs frame of the national community: the frame "spiral of silence" - "the frame of concern" (non-conflict - "the frame of concern" (conflict) - "the frame of independent activities". The national artists of the republic form the frame of "language in art". The frame is apolitical, conflict-free, vague, is not commented by the public. The dynamics of the frame of chats/comments of parental communities: the frame of "language purity" - the frame "should - should not learn by everyone".

Republic of Tatarstan. The official position of the Ministry of Education of the RT did not change over time and was constantly in a conflict-free frame. Since this was far from always true, that frame met rejection, and private users saw the problem of the language as the part of a conflicting interpretation with the political dimension, where the status of the infringed in rights moved from Russian to Tatar over time. The institutions for the preservation and development of the native/state/national language do not articulate their attitude to the language

problem, do not present the results of their activities to the general public. This silence sets the frame of "useless institutions for language".

At the level of school directors, the language problem is seen as a problem in the field of education and teaching methods, however, some dubious statements and value judgments of directors can set, and open a conflict frame. And we can clearly speak about the presence of a conflict frame in the language issue on the part of the Russian public opinion leader and the mitigation of the frame sharpness after the changes in 2017.

Russian and Tatar public opinion leaders agree on a conflicting political interpretation of the language situation. However, the difference is quite clear: Russian public opinion leaders stand for the right of the Russian language, demonstrating respect for the Tatar language and relying on the legislation of the Russian Federation, Tatar public opinion leaders more often use the opposition of languages, positioning the Russian language as a source of danger for the Tatar language, and rely on the legislation of the Republic of Tatarstan (primarily the Constitution of the Republic of Tatarstan).

The frame set by cultural figures can be characterized as the most peaceful. The public accepts this frame and supports, with the exception of the difficult year 2017, the comments on the artists' messages also set a conflict-free framework for the language situation in the Republic of Tatarstan.

## 4 Summary

The conflict frames of the participants in the language issue are built mainly around the incident point - the speeches by V.V. Putin at the Security Council in Yoshkar-Ola in 2017. A characteristic feature of the formation and implementation of conflict frames is their medium urgency. Thus, even an aggressive-activity "parental" (POL) frame does not exist for more than a year on average. The explanation for this lies in the field of event mediatization (including the conflict series on the language issue). The classic media rule applies: news exists as long as it exists in the media space. If a subject does not want a conflict situation to unfold around the event, he leaves the media field, creating conditions for the lack of information and, thus, emotions around it.

From this position the frame of the spiral of silence is formed and the frame of representatives of official language institutions, and the ministers of education and the directors of secondary educational institutions. The latter, being the actor in the language issue, on which all the responsibility for the implementation of the language policy was lowered and, in fact, absolutely powerless and not protected by law, the directors simply create an information vacuum around their activities. On the one hand, this contributes to the creation of a certain illusion of conflict absence around the language problem. On the other hand, the spiral of silence implies the message "we are silent because everyone knows about the situation." And this message does not reduce the social tension and conflict potential both inside and outside educational institutions, and especially in the Internet space. This is evidenced by conflict cases of individual schools that periodically pop up on social networks and are widely discussed by parents in chats and comments.

The frame structure and its semantics of the surveyed regions has its own characteristics and differences. For example, in Chuvashia, the Minister of Education appears with an atypical frame of conciliation with public opinion. His conflict frame differs from the frames of his

colleagues from all the republics in that he "is on the other side of the language barricades" defending the position of "the national public" of the region.

The attempts to set a non-contact frame of the language situation by officials artificially, hushing up the problem of languages are not successful. Comments reveal the presence of a conflict situation, and silence only exacerbates the conflict.

In general, there is a feeling of a request from the population for the intention to have a dialogue and the absence of this dialogue on the part of officials in the republics.

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The main techniques for a conflict-free frame development are the following ones: hushing up the problem, highlighting the situation as a problem in the field of education, teaching methods, positioning of collective responsibility for the preservation and development of languages, fixing the principle of voluntariness in language learning, compliance (legitimate activity through compliance) with the law. Technologies have a positive effect if they correspond to reality (objective), if it is a frame of reality, and not a frame of a fictional construction (a constructed frame).

## 5  Conclusions

Thus, the hypotheses put forward in the study were fully confirmed. So, in all republics, conflict frames are built mainly around the incident point - the speeches by V.V. Putin at the Security Council in Yoshkar-Ola in 2017. A characteristic feature of the formation and implementation of conflict frames is their medium urgency.

The frame structure and its semantics of the surveyed regions has its own characteristics and differences: from the difference in the problems of the languages of the Turkic and Finno-Ugric groups, to the costs of teaching methods and the manifestations of nationalism and discrimination based on language.

It was revealed that the main techniques for the formation of a conflict-free frame, as the main one in all the surveyed regions, are the following ones: hushing up the problem, highlighting the situation as a problem in the field of education, teaching methods, positioning of collective responsibility for the preservation and development of languages, fixation the principle of voluntariness in language learning, compliance (legitimation of activities through compliance) with the law.

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