

## CODE SWITCHING AS A MANIPULATIVE STRATEGY IN RUSSIAN ISLAMIC DISCOURSE

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### ABSTRACT

The current study is an attempt to investigate Russian Islamic discourse as a specific type of religious discourse and the way of using code switching to manipulate communicators. In Russian Federation the Islamic community is polyethnic. RF moslems of different nationalities use in their communication two or more languages simultaneously: Arabic, Russian and native languages. The use of a particular language depends on the type of communication in the religious discourse. Communication with God through five daily prayers and reading sacred texts is possible only in Arabic; personal and group communication is usually carried out in native language; mass communication on the institutional level is carried out in Russian. Since Members of the Islamic community use different languages in different functional areas, it is possible to characterise Russian Islamic discourse as diglossic (according to J.Fishman [1]). Typical for diglossia code switching becomes one of the means of persuading and manipulation in religious discourse.

***Keywords:*** *Russian Islamic discourse, diglossia, code switching, manipulation, manipulative strategy*

### INTRODUCTION

In Russia, the Muslim community (the so-called Ummah) is represented by Tatars, Bashkirs, Dagestanis, Kabardians, Circassians, Balkars, Karachais, and other peoples and nationalities [2]. Some representatives of these ethnic groups have a certain degree of command of the ethnic and Russian, ethnic and Arabic or Russian and Arabic languages. A considerable part of those people (mainly the urban population) are Russian-speaking and have a poor command of the ethnic language, and only a small, the most educated part speak three languages: ethnic, Russian and Arabic / Turkish. As a rule, in religious discourse, the use of different languages corresponds to a certain type of communication: communication with God, personal, collective and mass communication.

In Islam, the acquaintance with the Quran and the recourse to God requires the believer's knowledge of the Arabic language, which is unrelated to the ethnic languages of the Russian Federation and typologically different from them and has a special graphic, making it difficult to read the sacred texts independently. The content of the "sacred word as the embodiment of the Divine essence" [3] may be obscured for non-Arabic-speaking Muslims, so it is the extra-linguistic factors of the discursive event, its tonality that becomes more significant for them.

If a believer fails to find the Arabic "formula" for a certain communicative event or if he or she recourses to an internal prayer as a means of hypercommunication, the ethnic language is used. In this case, the code is switched from sacred Arabic to the native language. In personal and mass communication performed in the ethnic language, the transition to Arabic occurs automatically when discourse formulas (e.g., etiquette greetings, gratitude formulas, etc., formulas of goodwill accompanying the sacred names of prophets, angels) are uttered.

Ethnic languages (including Russian) are used in personal and collective communication, which implies dialogical or group communication between believers [3], including communication with representatives of a religious institution that possesses theological knowledge (mufti, imam, mullah, etc.), and believers who do not possess such knowledge (or possess it to a lesser extent). The significance of the role of the Muslim clergy has increased significantly due to the aforementioned problem of Muslims' incomplete command of Arabic and, as a result, to their inability to independently read the original sacred texts. In modern Russia, cases of the unification of Muslims on an ethnic or subconfessional basis (the so-called enclaveization phenomenon) are increasingly the case, which results in the opening of Uzbek, Arab, Afghan, Tajik, Azerbaijani and other mosques [2], where communication is carried out in the ethnic language.

By virtue of its status as the state language of the Russian Federation, Russian is the main means of mass communication in Islamic discourse, e.g., in the case of the appeal of the Muslim clergy to believers through the media. The verbal interaction of representatives of spiritual boards of Muslims of Russia and other representatives of the Muslim community is carried out in Russian. The participants of the discursive situation are the initiated who are attached to the knowledge of the supreme Divine truth, on the one hand, and those striving for this truth, on the other. Obviously, the introduction to Islam and the instruction for observing its principles in mass communication are implemented through speech influence, including through manipulation.

Various discursive means at the level of interactive strategies, semantic macrostructures, lexicon, syntax, rhetorical figures, aural and visual methods, etc. can become manipulative [4]. The use of different languages with intentional switching from one language to another in religious communication, in our opinion, can also be attributed to means of manipulation, as it becomes not just an instrument of argumentation, but a means of persuasion with the aim of achieving the goals set.

## **MATERIAL AND METHODS**

Since manipulation can be personal as well as social, and religious discourse belongs to the institutional type of discourse, we will focus on group and mass communication, in which speech influence and manipulation are most evident.

The goal of religious discourse is to initiate and maintain the faith; it can be achieved through trusting interaction, designed to induce a person to internal, invisible spiritual work, an act of conscience and repentance, and also through the external, formal engagement of the interlocutor in a particular system of religious views – propaganda [5].

Sermon is the central genre of religious discourse, which is aimed at conveying religious truths to the believer. From the point of view of homiletics, sermon is a divine message through human mediation. With the help of sermon clergy representatives strengthen the faith, influence believers, convince them of the correctness and truth of the religious teaching, as well as of the necessity certain acts and the unacceptability, sinfulness of others [6].

Texts of sermons served as the main material of our research aimed at determining the role of code switching in language manipulation in the context of religious discourse. In addition to sermons, texts of appeals and messages of the Muslim clergy to believers and those becoming familiar with Islam were used in our analysis. The texts were selected on the official websites of Muslim spiritual boards, such as [www.muslim.ru](http://www.muslim.ru), [www.cdum.ru](http://www.cdum.ru), [www.dumrf.ru](http://www.dumrf.ru), [www.oneIslam.ru](http://www.oneIslam.ru), [www.islam.ru](http://www.islam.ru), [www.islamtoday.ru](http://www.islamtoday.ru) and others. The material was selected due to the mass character of communication and therefore to the influencing nature of these texts. The appeals, messages and sermons of the Muslim clergy representatives are characterized by intertextuality and polyfunctionality. Since communication with the addressee is "remote" and written in nature, the texts aimed at conversion to the faith and observation of the Sharia law should be as clear and compelling as possible.

Using the method of continuous selection, we selected texts involving two or more languages. Code switching is considered from the point of view of the sociolinguistic approach as the choice of one of two or more languages when changing the communicative situation. The introduction of units of another language within an utterance while preserving semantic links is also seen as code switching.

When analyzing the material, we proceeded from the principles of social constructivism and the understanding of discourse as a field of purposeful meanings with a symbolic being. The discursive field is not a neutral reflection of the world but an active constructive force recategorizing the space of being. The most productive methods in our case are those of critical discourse analysis by N. Fairclough and those of discursive psychology by M. Billing, D. Edwards, J. Potter and others [7].

### **THEORY**

As noted in the introduction, during communication within Islamic discourse, code switching can occur between the ethnic, Russian and Arabic languages. Communicants can be divided into several groups: 1) the supreme beginning – God 2) bilingual addressers – the Muslim clergy representatives who necessarily know Arabic (in addition to the national and/or Russian language) thanks to their

education; 3) bilingual addressees and monolingual addressees – believers and those converted who, as a rule, do not speak Arabic as well or do not speak it at all. In group and mass communication, chosen for analysis, all the participants indicated are involved: the Supreme Being is invisibly present and is both the addresser and the addressee of communication; clergymen, who deal with sermons on behalf of the Supreme Being influence the addressees and control their behaviour; believers seek answers to questions in order to approach the divine truth.

Influencing the addressees by means of speech, persuading them to act in a certain way without preserving the right of choice is regarded as manipulation [4]. In various types of discourse, different manipulative strategies and tactics are distinguished: the intimidation strategy, the polarization strategy with the use of the tactics of recourse fundamental values, the indoctrination strategy implemented through affirmation and multiple repetitions, dulling consciousness and allowing any information to be deposited in the subconscious; the tactics of certainty avoidance, generalization, etc. [8]. Such strategies are also used in religious (in our case, Muslim) sermons, the choice of language is one of the manipulation tools. The situation is complicated by the fierce struggle within the Muslim discourses themselves, because, as mentioned above, the Muslim world of Russia is ethnically and, consequently, ideologically heterogeneous. We are far from the interpretation of ethnicity in the essentialist vein, we are close to understanding this phenomenon in terms of constructivism, but such this understanding does not at all deny the ontological reality of the ethnos, which can be defined as a certain stereotype of behaviour [9]. And as long as different systems of values associated with behavioural values and dominants collide in this field, the Islamic discourse itself, being their projection, is defined as transitive and indefinite, which increases its agonism.

## RESULTS

The strategy of polarization of the Muslim world and all others is accompanied by recourse to fundamental values, supported by an appeal to authority through the citation of sacred texts. In this case, the use of Arabic for citation is the guarantor of the truth of the claimed. As an example, we can use the Address of the Chairman of the Russian Spiritual Board of Muslims, Chairman of the Russian Council of Muftis, Mufti Sheikh Ravil Gaynutdin, on the occasion of the beginning of the blessed month of Ramadan (<http://dumrf.ru/common/speech/13881>), a fragment of which is represented in Figure 1.

Посланник Аллаха, да благословит его Аллах и приветствует, сказал:

من صام رمضان إيماناً واحتساباً غُفِرَ له ما تقدّم من ذنبه

«Тому, кто во время Рамадана будет поститься с верой и надеждой на награду Аллаха, простятся его прежние грехи».

من قام رمضان إيماناً واحتساباً غُفِرَ له ما تقدّم من ذنبه،

ومن قام ليلة القدر إيماناً واحتساباً غُفِرَ له ما تقدّم من ذنبه



И тому, кто во время Рамадана будет молиться по ночам с верой и надеждой на награду Аллаха, простятся его прежние грехи. Тому, кто проведёт в молитве Ночь предопределения с верой и надеждой на награду Аллаха, простятся его прежние грехи».



Fig.1

[The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said:

"Those who will be fasting with faith and hope for the reward of Allah during Ramadan, will be forgiven for their former sins"

And those who will pray at night with faith and hope for the reward of Allah during Ramadan, will be forgiven for their former sins. Those who will spend the Night of predestination in prayer with faith and hope for the reward of Allah will be forgiven for their former sins."]

The reference to the Holy Quran raises the authority of the addresser as the bearer of the true knowledge, which he shares with ordinary believers. Here again we find signs of manipulation, in which the addressee demonstrates his higher position in relation to the manipulated. *Дорогие мусульмане! Задайте себе вопрос: «Посещаю ли я религиозные уроки? Получил ли я необходимые религиозные знания?»*. Ведь Аллах Всемогуций сказал в Священном Коране (Сура «Али 'Имран», аят 110) [Dear Muslims! Ask yourselves the question: "Do I attend religious lessons? Have I received the necessary religious knowledge?". After all, Allah Almighty said in the Holy Quran (Surah "Ali 'Imran", ayat 110): *كنتم خير أمة أخرجت للناس تأمرون بالمعروف وتنهون عن المنكر وتؤمنون بالله* *Здесь говорится о том, что мусульмане, последователи Пророка Мухаммада ﷺ являются лучшей из общин, повелевают выполнять обязанности, запрещают грешить, и веруют в Аллаха* [Here it says that Muslims, followers of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, are the best community, they order to perform duties, forbid sinning, and believe in Allah]: *كنتم خير أمة أخرجت للناس تأمرون بالمعروف وتنهون عن المنكر وتؤمنون بالله* (Friday's sermon by Rashid Sibgatulin, <http://www.islam-portal.ru/imam/85/6372/>).

The use of the indoctrination strategy through multiple repetition is observed in the mandatory utterance of various formulas of praise and goodwill accompanying the sacred names of prophets, angels, etc. Formulas can be pronounced in both the ethnic and Arabic languages. The choice of language may be due to the need to emphasize the primordial nature of the formulas and the origin of Islam as a religion, and then Arabic is used. *Паломники вместе, в один*



"renewal"...] (sermon by the Chairman of the Russian Council of Muftis, <http://www.muslim.ru/1/cont/33/36/1946.htm>);

2) the use of arabisms independently without translation: ...*нельзя придавать такфиру тех из наших братьев, которые собираются праздновать наступление нового года...* [...one cannot place under takfir those of our partners who are going to celebrate the coming of the new year...] (sermon "Do not Leave Matters Unfinished" <http://www.muslim.ru/1/cont/33/36/2680.htm>); *Сказано в Кур`анне о том, чтобы верующие не совершали гыйба по отношению друг к другу* [The Quran tells believers not to commit ghibah towards each other] (Sermon "Woes of the Tongue", <http://www.islam-portal.ru/imam/85/6386/>);

3) the use of Arabic *inclusions* as clarifications in the case of the use of a Russian (or Old Slavic by origin) word that is similar in meaning: ...*Воистину, в сухуре – Божья благодать (баракат)!*; ...*Если человек выезжает из дома в другой населенный пункт или местность, расстояние до которых составляет более чем 90 км (примерно), то он считается "путником" (мусафир)* [...There is, indeed, God's grace (barakaat) in saḥūr!; ... If a person leaves home for another locality, which is more than 90 km (approximately) away, then he or she is considered a "traveler" (musafir)] (The fast of the month of Ramadan, a decree by the Council of Muftis, <http://www.muslim.ru/>).

## DISCUSSION

Coming back to the dependence of the choice of language on the discursive situation and the type of communication in the Muslim discourse, we can display cases of code switching in a table.

Communication participants		Type of text	Language	Code switching
addresser	addressee			
believer	God	prayer	Arabic	from Arabic to native
God through a clergy representative	believer	sermon	Russian / ethnic	from Russian / ethnic to Arabic; from Russian to ethnic
clergy representative	believer	appeal, message	Russian	from Russian to ethnic
believer	clergy representative	daily communication	ethnic	from ethnic to Russian

Table 1. Choice of language depending on the discursive situation.

The use of the Russian language can be aimed at the consolidation of Muslims in Russia: it is no accident that most of the official websites of Muslim spiritual boards operate in Russian. Thanks to the use of Russian language as the language of interethnic communication, spoken held by the majority of citizens of the Russian Federation representing various ethnic groups, communication among members of different religious communities becomes possible.

Texts of sermons pronounced in non-native Russian language with obvious signs of language interference (various phonetic and grammatical shifts, e.g., *каждый месяц по три день держатъ уразу* – 'observe sawm for three day every month') and accompanied by a switch to Arabic are particularly interesting from the linguistic point of view. The Imam pronounces the sermon using at least one, and often two languages which are non-native both for him and for the addressees of the language, commenting and accompanying the Arabic quotations with Russian explanations.

Going beyond the properly Islamic discourse (paying attention to its peripheral phenomena), it should be noted that the use of units of the Russian language can help reduce the level of aggression against Muslims. Thus, in the early 2000s, Russian-language media texts related to aggression and terrorism were abundant in the arabisms *jihad*, *shaheed*, *the Taliban*, marking Islam. By the second decade of the 21st century. they were replaced by neutral units – suicide bombers, armed groups, etc. [10]



## CONCLUSION

Communicative space, which includes Islamic discourse in the Russian Federation, can be described as bi-/ multilingual with a strong diglossia. In this space, the Arabic language stands apart as a sacred language of culture. Russian was and remains a polyfunctional prestigious language in all areas of communication. Other ethnic languages are in a minority situation in relation to both of them. However, the Tatar language or the languages of the Russian Caucasus have always had and continue to have a high prestige among their speakers and a positive social image, since the policy of the USSR on the institutionalization of nationalities led to formal equality of languages and their official status. That is, even despite being minority languages, these languages cannot be classified as minored ones. [11] As for the languages of the new migrants, they are experiencing double and triple pressure: from the Arabic language, as the language of sacred culture, and from the Russian language, as the language of secular culture and the state language on the territory of the Russian Federation. All of the above-listed factors create a very difficult situation in the field of the Islamic discourse in the Russian Federation and broad space for various types of manipulation. The use of Arabic as an authoritative sacred language original quotations from the Koran in Arabic and their interpretation can serve as a means of influencing the addressees: they seem to indicate the truth of the addressers' words, making their utterances convincing and forcing the addressees to believe and follow the covenants. The use of the native language can be conditioned by such goals as contact establishment, the building of trusting relationships, etc. On the other hand, the spread of Russian-language Islamic texts of a certain orientation may allow addressers to influence those in doubt and convert them to Islam.

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