Collective Linguistic Identity Construction of Volga Germans in Argentina

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Volga Germans are an ethnic group that migrated to the Volga Region in Russia over 250 years ago. One hundred years later, a part of this group moved to Argentina, where they settled in colonies located mostly in the provinces of Entre Ríos, Buenos Aires and La Pampa. Only after the 1950th did they start to learn the majority language, due to socioeconomic changes in Argentina. Until then, they had lived in so-called language islands (cf. Mattheier 1994: 334), almost completely isolated from the majority society (in Russia as well as in Argentina).

Due to their history, this group was able to conserve its original language variety, namely Volga German, which is still in use in the colonies, especially by the older generation. Volga German also plays an important role in the dynamic process of the collective identity construction (defined as identification with a group through common goals, activities and discourses, cf. Straub 2004: 298f.) of the group. In mixing the language varieties in contact (Argentinian Spanish and Volga German), the group members reflect the hybridity of their collective identity. The present paper aims at revealing the relationship between the language use and the collective identity construction of Volga Germans in Argentina. In order to do so, it will draw upon the results of an empirical study conducted in Argentina in the spring of 2012, which included questionnaires and interviews that have been evaluated quantitatively and qualitatively.

References:


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