

## **Linguistic Virtual Space as a Means of Correction of Speech Deviances of the Subjects of Bilingual Environment**

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**Abstract:** This study discusses the utilization of the linguistic virtual space as a means of correction of speech deviances of the subjects of bilingual environment. We compare such terms as “linguistic space”, virtual space linguistic virtual space, specifying the extent of their research in the academic studies. We emphasise the positive and negative features of the virtual space communication; analyse the term bilingual environment, its advantages and disadvantages as well as its significant role in the process of development of linguistic competence of an individual. We define speech deviances of the subjects of bilingual environment within the conditions of Russian-Mari bilinguism. We provide the analysis of the Mari linguistic virtual space its purpose and informative content of linguistic resources. The study also contains the results of our pedagogical experiment to discover the young people’s awareness of the Mari linguistic virtual space, its forms (web-sites, internet-magazines, electronic educational resources) and its demand among the youth.

**Key words:** Virtual space, bilingual environment, speech, utilization, youth

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The linguistic space, understood as a consistent area of language expansion on a certain territory (be it mother tongue or an officially recognized language) is a term both debatable and nevertheless, consolidated with the scientific community. Just like virtual space which is understood as a sphere of technical, technological and social relations established in the process of utilisation of computer (electronial technical) network. But the term “linguistic virtual space” has not yet been developed and requires careful attention of theorists and experts as it may have a great impact on the formation of the linguistic competence of individuals as well as help maintain and correct the speech deviances of the members of bilingual environment. This is especially true when dealing with the young generation which is growing in technocratic society and has clipping thinking. Thus the use of modern technologies as well as virtual space technologies is indispensable in the process of working with the youth.

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Virtual space communication is an essential if not major, part of life of the modern youth. All forms of communication in the virtual space (e-mail, social networks (Odnoklasniki, Facebook, v Kontakte), blogs,

forums, chats, tweeters, video conferences, mailing lists, virtual games, etc.) focus on managing communication between people.

We should note that virtual space communication has its own specific features. On one hand, it has a positive impact on the process of communication in general, facilitating a quick search and exchange of information and generating an ability to immediately select, process and classify it. A whole range of new, literally cyberontologic, expectations and interests, motives and purposes, needs and attitudes occur in an individual’s life including the forms of psychological and social activity which are immediately connected with cyberspace a new kind of space of life of a human being (Pleshakov, 2009).

On the other hand, this type of communication does not always follow language norms. Communicators often deliberately deform the lexical (slang words or colloquialisms), morphological (mismatched gender of the nouns) or syntactic (unfinished sentences, careless syntax) structure.

This problem is very disturbing and many have lately attempted to change the situation. A lot of web-sites and internet magazines appeal to the problem of pollution of the linguistic virtual space. For example, the web-site offers answers to the questions about the correct usage of words and provides information about various

grammar, punctuation, lexical and stylistic mistakes which should be avoided in the speech. Infotainment internet magazine e-Media criticises the level of linguistic literacy of corporate web-sites, blaming them to abound with mistakes, misprints, slang expressions and even profanities. The "Russian For Us" web-site provides help from the Russian language experts as well as introduces a list of common mistakes and welcomes to participate in the message board of the Russian philology devotees.

Likewise, we focused the research on the analysis of the modern linguistic virtual space and aimed to study its recourses for correction of speech deviances of the members of bilingual environment.

But first of all, let us define the term "bilingual environment" it is a concurrent existence of two language systems. The study of literature showed that the researchers most commonly reveal the specifics of bilingual educational environment on various stages of the educational system and characterise it as a system of psycho-pedagogical conditions, the purpose of which is to study the language, acquire special knowledge, reveal personality traits and abilities, acculturation. It is a kind of educational environment where the main emphasis is made on the development of a bilingual child obtaining their social and cultural experience. Aliev and Ulzytueva note that bilingual environment helps a child to successfully master languages. Thus, bilingual educational environment contributes to the cognitive, emotional and social development of an individual as well as prepares him for self-actualization in a policultural society. A general study must approach bilingual environment as a social and cultural space for societal, individual and personal development of an individual (Aliev and Kazhe, 2005).

Scientific achievements in the area of bilingual educational environment are connected with the studies of Zappert and Cruz, Troike and Dulay and Burt. This issue was also addressed by Dutcher, August and Hakuta. A great contribution in the formation of the theory of language contact was made by V.A. Bogoroditsky, E.D. Polivanov, V.Y. Rosenzveig, L.V. Scherba and others. Russian linguists have studied various aspects of bilinguism: general linguistic issues of the interaction of languages (I.E. Beloded, Y.D. Desheriev), linguistic and psychological basis for language contact (G.V. Kolshansky, V.Y. Rosenzveig, A.I. Vereschaghin). A project "Light" which deals with the development of bilingual education at early stages of life, has become very popular worldwide.

Many researchers distinguish both positive and negative aspects of bilingual education. The debates about advantages and disadvantages of an individual's existence and development in a bilingual environment

remain relevant today. Some researchers say that bilingual environment has a positive effect children growing in this environment are prone to analytical thinking at their earlier age, they are open-minded and have a higher level of intelligence and communicative skills. Another advantage of bilingual education is that it helps an individual to feel comfortable in a multilingual world and makes the student more flexible, tolerant and uninhibited. Other authors identify the negative effects of bilingual environment under the pretext of language integration, a student of bilingual programs has to, one way or another, experience assimilation and get out of touch with native culture, the knowledge of mother tongue decreases. Other negative arguments against bilingualism and its impact on the speech development of a bilingual child include late talking, little vocabulary comparing to the peers, difficulties with grammar, etc. (Huskelberg, 2006). The survey of bilingual children pointed to the asynchrony of their development, i.e., a delay from the age norm in formation of major psychological functions responsible for the basic literacy. The delay in formation of major psychological functions is generally determined by the perinatal disorders as well as depriving influence of social and cultural environment we should mention that for many children with speech development deviations and weak basic psychological functions, life in a bilingual environment aggravates the literacy difficulties and children who have speech defects or signs of them must, at least on the early stages of education, remain in a monolingual environment. Children who experience problems in the process of education because of remaining in a bilingual environment need a special correctional training in order to be able to study in a public school.

Let us consider how can these conclusions apply to the bilingual environment of the Republic Mari El where two nationalities are predominant Mari and Russians (Fedorova *et al.*, 2015). The detection and description of peculiarities of the Russian speech of bilinguals living in Finno-Ugric republics of Russian Federation are presented in the works of N.I. Isanbaev, M.I. Iliyev, Z.G. Zorina. A significant contribution in the study of Russian Mari bilinguism was made by L.P. Gruzov. Many of his articles, text-books, manuals and dictionaries are dedicated to the examination of this problem: "On teaching Russian pronunciation in Mari schools", "The challenges of Russian orthography", "The defining phonetic characteristics of the Russian speech of the Mari students", "Interferent phenomena on phonetic and phonological level in the conditions of Mari bilingualism", "Teaching Russian pronunciation to the Mari", "Mari Russian bilingualism and the issue of improvement of teaching Russian in schools".

Doctor of Philology, professor L.P. Vasikova, a teacher of the Russian and the Mari languages, made a considerable investment in the study of Russian-Mari bilingualism. She approaches this problem in her works "The Russian-Mari Dictionary", "The Problems of Comparative Typological Research in Teaching the Russian Language in the National Educational Establishments with Finno-Ugric Languages", "The Comparative Grammar of the Russian and the Mari Languages".

We can also mention such scientists as I.S. Galkin ("On certain features of the Russian-Mari linguistic interaction"), I.G. Ivanov ("Mari lexical loanwords in the Russian dialects of the Viatsky region"), M.I. Iliyina ("Interlinguistic phonetic transposition and interference under the Mari-Russian bilingualism"), D.E. Kazantsev ("Bilingualism in the Republic Mari El"), A.N. Kuklin ("Problems of the bilingualological theory"), N.T. Petitov ("Special features of the word combinations in the Russian and Mari languages"), Z.V. Uchaev ("Calquing in the Mari language of the Russian loanwords") and others.

A bilingual citizen of the Republic Mari El is characterised by his affiliation to three linguistic communities primary (among the Mari), secondary (among the Russian-speaking population) and bilingual community (among the bilingual individuals). The process of interengagement of the languages during their contact can be traced on various levels and is often "a result of being "non-exempt" from the mother tongue habits". However, the degree of penetration of various language levels is not the same. A number of linguistic works mention that generally the first degree of penetration during the interaction of languages is observed on the lexical level as it "is the first to react to the contact with another language", besides as notes A. Kukkonen, it happens on the same lexical level "which opens the door for the phonetic and morphologic phenomena". The role of phonetic data of interferences is as important as of other linguistic features: vocabulary, grammar. They are strongly correlated, because linguistic aspects sometimes cannot be described without mentioning grammatical or lexical features of linguistic units. Due to the fact that, besides the primary community, a bilingual has a secondary linguistic community, the individual's non-native speech may reflect one language system, the system of the mother tongue as secondary-when implemented with Russian speakers. Thus, the implementation of the phonologic system in a non-native speech of a bilingual will be different from the implementation of the units of standard speech in literate Russian language. As a result of interaction of both languages the bilinguals speech

creates a sort of interlevel intermediate "system" between the Mari and the Russian languages. Nevertheless, the colloquial type of Russian speech of the bilinguals cannot be considered as a certain system of a newly assimilated language, because any degree of presence/absence of norm of speech depends on the phonologic system of the mother tongue (Mari) of a bilingual individual. An intermediate "system" is a national version of colloquial literary Russian language. Thus, the Russian speech of the Mari bilinguals may contain newly created phonetical forms of segments. But the newly created versions of segments are not standard for the Russian language and cannot be introduced for application because they do not exist in the phonological system of the Russian language. Therefore, we are talking about a specific "national" version of colloquial literary Russian language or about "the formation of a new linguistic unit called "bilingualect" as a version of the national language". This problem is significant due to the absence of comprehensive study of the specific application of segment units in the Russian speech of the mari bilinguals. Unfortunately up to the present in the conditions of Mari Russian bilingualism in the Republic Mari El, the peculiarities of functioning of both languages have not been studied enough. The major goal is to signify and describe the specifics of non-standard use of speech units and study the conditions and frequency of their occurrence in the process of communication, where many Mari nationals are prone to make mistakes while speaking Russian. These mistakes primarily relate to the sound-producing skills and stylistic structure of speech. From generation to generation many indigenous Mari citizens have been making same speech mistakes, some of them are even being teachers which is totally intolerable because the children who listen to their speech later on reproduce same mistakes in their own speech. In their speech bilinguals fail to distinguish some sounds which don't exist in the mother tongue, that is why they are prone to make phonetic mistakes (e.g., in Mari speech there are no sounds equivalent to Russian (v') (v)). Therefore, to correct mistakes that the Mari make while speaking Russian special work is required.

An effective means to solve this problem is information and communication technologies and the facilities of the linguistic virtual space. Let us examine the options of Mari linguistic virtual space, the web-sites and portals in Mari, electronic dictionaries, encyclopedias, etc. Arslan is the first ethnocultural internet magazine in Mari. It has been operating since 2012. The author of the magazine is Elvira Kuklina. Its main purpose is to promote public awareness of the Mari language and culture of the Mari people. "Arslan" magazine groups are represented

in all social networks v Kontakte, Odnoklassniki, facebook, tweetter, etc. On the pages of "Arslan" one will find various news of Finno-Ugric community, information for the young ethno-journalists, linguistic resources (about the international day of mother tongue, the first national festival of languages "Lingva-Territoria", a webinar on "Modern Forms and Methods of Formation of Neologisms in Finno-Ugric languages"). The magazine contains interesting video reports and films, photogallery about the Mari people, their traditional and professional culture. For those who would like to make a translation from Russian into Mari and vice versa, the "Intellectual" company lead by Elvira Kuklina will translate any text.

Youth internet magazine "Kidsher" was founded in 2014. Its author is Nikolay Liubimov, a student of The Institute of National Culture and Intercultural Communication of The Federal State-Funded Educational Institution of Higher Education "Mari State University". The magazine is available in two language versions Russian and Mari. It contains information about culture, sport, remarkable dates, famous people of the Mari land, etc. The sections of special interest are culture, news, society, Finno-Ugric community, contemporaries.

On the official national portal "portal mari ru" there is a section in the Mari state language. It contains >10 columns and provides educational information, electronic translation tools and other resources in Mari.

Free internet site "The Mari Language" is the source of essential information and materials about the Mari language. This web-site will be interesting for those who speak Mari as well as those who begin studying it.

Albert Salimov created a Mari web-site about the Mari people who live in the Republic of Bashkortostan.

Here you will find information about the customs and traditions, history of villages, famous people, Mari prayers, folk songs, etc.

News web-site in Mari "Uver yolva" started functioning on March 22, 2011. This web resource contains 16 columns with news on various topics, lyrics of Mari songs, etc.

Another useful resource is an open group in v Kontakte "The Mari language-Mari yilme" wich contains such sections as "The Mari language study course", "Please, translate", "Poems in Mari" and others.

A web-site by Kadzuto Matsumura about the Mari language (Eng.), (Japanese) contains the Meadow Mari Japanese dictionary.

The free encyclopedia "Mari Wikipedia" provides information about the grammar of the Mari language, various textbooks and manuals in Mari, etc. Other sources include electronic Mari dictionaries, the Big Mari-Russian Dictionary, Finno-Ugric library, electronic collection in Mari, etc.

We have decided to examine whether the young people are aware of all these web-sites and magazines and how often do they use these resources in general as well as for improving their linguistic competence. In the course of research the following methods were used: information resources analysis which allows to apply the investigations of other authors in case of revealed unexamined problems.

Complex analysis which provides comprehensive information (both qualitative and quantitative) about the examined object. Compositional analysis which allows to describe the structure and content of the examined phenomenon. Systematic analysis which helps to examine the object of research in all of its internal relations and interactions. Critical analysis which allows to reveal the strengths and weaknesses of the investigated phenomenon. Comparative analysis which provides the general and specific features of the investigated phenomena.

Method of classification which helps to classify the investigated phenomena in relation to each other. Praxeological method which provides information from a large number of surveyed respondents. Method of modelling which helps create and apply models that properly reflect the subject of study.

**Experimental facilities of the research:** The Federal State-Funded Educational Institution of Higher Education "Mari State University". The survey involved 100 students of the Institute of Pedagogics and Psychology. The survey was conducted in three stages.

The first stage included the analysis of the current state of the problem of utilisation of the linguistic virtual space as a means of formation of linguistic competence of individuals about academic literature and practical application we have developed an experimental programme.

At the second stage, we have tested the students to reveal their awareness of the virtual space of the Mari language and its components.

The third stage comprised the classification, interpretation and generalization of the results of resears as well as arrangement of recommendations and conclusions.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Now, at the second stage of our experiment we detected the awareness of the students about the virtual space of the Mari language. In the Table 1 and Fig. 1-12 you can find the results. Having analysed the survey answers, we have summed up the results which

Table 1: Utilization of the linguistic virtual space as a means of correction of speech deviances

Questions	Answers (No. of students)		
What is linguistic virtual space?	Full definition (22)	Partial definition (50)	Do not know (28)
What kind of resources of the linguistic virtual space do you use?	Social networks (50)	Internet dictionaries, scientific magazines and newspapers, libraries (22)	Do not know (28)
Which web-sites and portals in Mari do you know? Please, name them	Marimedia, mariuver (18)	Do not know (82)	
Please, name and characterize the forms of network communication in Mari.	Social networks (28)	Do not know (66)	Video-conferences, forums (6)
Do you use the electronic dictionary of the Mari language?	Yes (20)	No (70)	Seldom (10)
What do you know about the Mari Wikipedia? How often do you visit it?	For the history of culture of people studies and if needed (18)	Neither know, nor visit (82)	
What do you know about Mari electronic magazines (Arslan, Kidsher)?	Do not know (86)	Used these magazines at school lessons; information about the Republic Mari El, news and articles; youth internet-magazines (14)	
If your answer to the previous question is 'yes', then what is your purpose in visiting these electronic magazines?	Do not visit (86)	For self-development and self-enrichment (14)	
Does internet provide opportunities for the improvement of linguistic competence?	Yes (with help of electronic books, dictionaries, web-sites, video and audio files) (80)	No (2)	Do not know (18)
If yes, then which language is represented more: Russian or Mari?	Russian (96)	Mari (4)	
Do you think that linguistic virtual space is efficient for the improvement of the individual's linguistic competence?	Yes (72)	No (20)	Do not know (8)
What materials can you suggest to enrich the linguistic virtual space and use it for the improvement of one's own speech?	Dictionaries, reference books, books, presentations, audio and video recordings (44)	Academic publications, speech improving simulators, online lessons (12)	The material is sufficient (12)

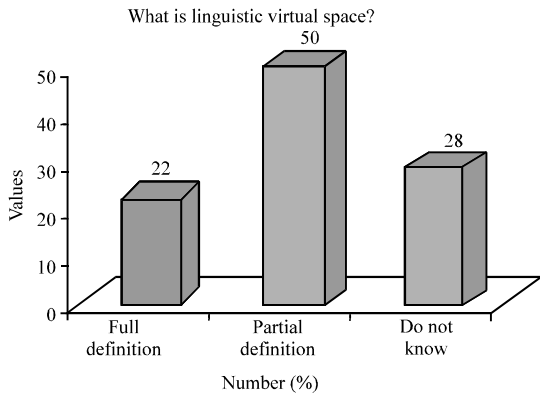


Fig. 1: Definition of the linguistic virtual space; the results of the survey of students

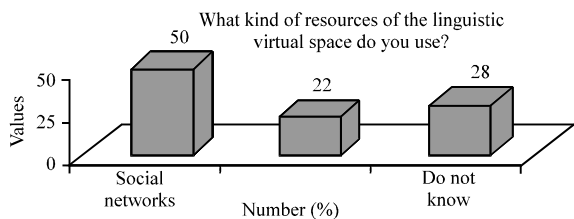


Fig. 2: Awareness of the resources of virtual space; results of the survey

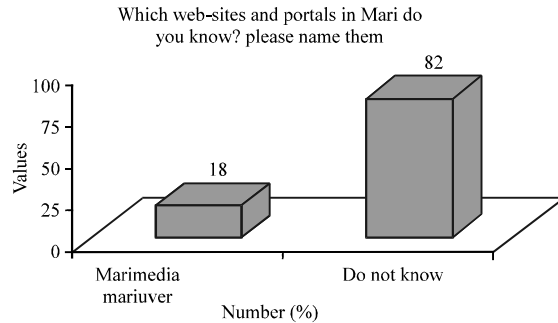


Fig. 3: Awareness of the web-sites and portals in the Mari language; results of the survey

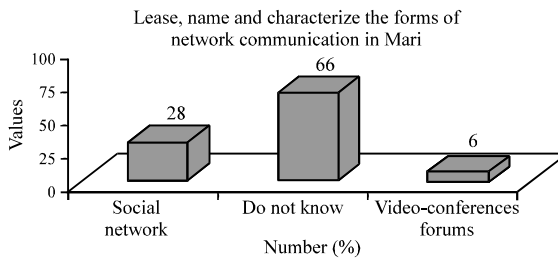


Fig. 4: Awareness of the forms of network communication in Mari; results of the survey of students

you can see on Fig. 1-12. As the results of the research show, at the initial stage of our experiment 22 out of 100

students give a full definition and have a clear idea of the linguistic virtual space that is 22%. The 50 students

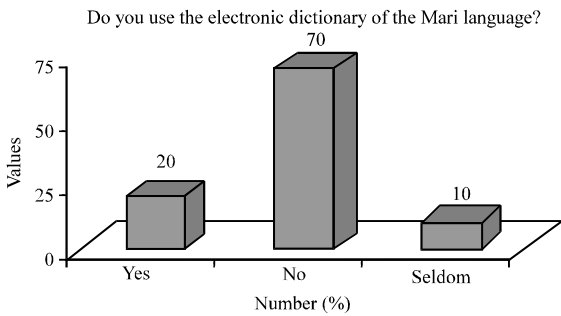


Fig. 5: The use of electronic dictionaries in the Mari language; results of the survey

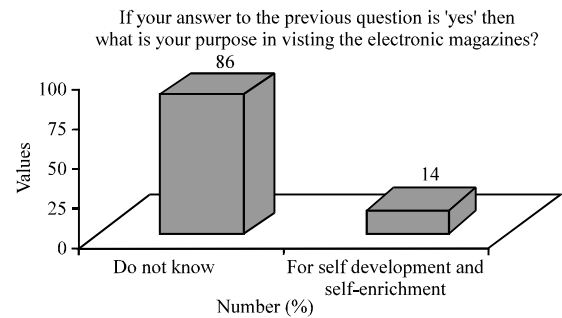


Fig. 8: The purpose of visiting electronic magazines' web-sites; results of the survey

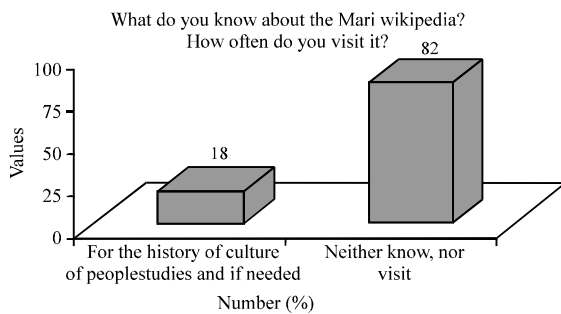


Fig. 6: Awareness of the students about the Mari wikipedia; results of the survey

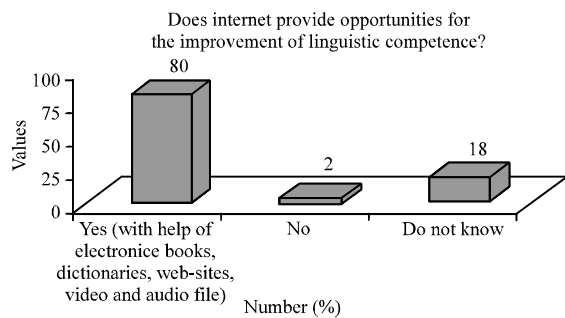


Fig. 9: Efficiency of utilization of internet for the improvement of personal linguistic competence; results of the students' opinion

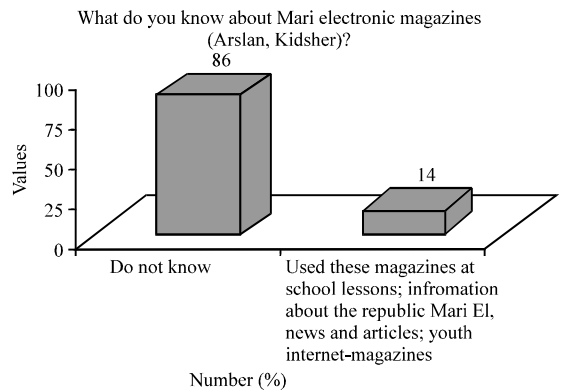


Fig. 7: Awareness of the Mari electronic magazines; results of the survey

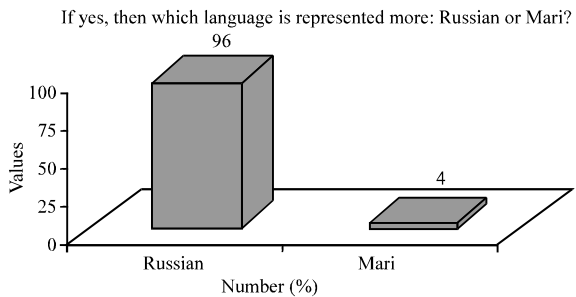


Fig. 10: Improvement of linguistic competence with the help of internet resources in Russian and Mari; results of the students' opinion

have inaccurate understanding of the essence of “the linguistic virtual space” that is 50%. The 28 students (28%) do not have any idea about the essence of the linguistic virtual space.

To the question “Which resources of the linguistic virtual space do you use?” we have received the following answers presented on Fig. 2: the majority of students (50%) use social networks (v Kontakte, Odnoklassniki), 22 % of students utilize internet magazines and newspapers, internet libraries and dictionaries and the rest 28% don't use any type of linguistic virtual space resources since they have no idea

about their purpose and use in real life. The majority of the surveyed respondents 82% are not aware and don't use the web-sites and portals in Mari. Only 18 % of students know these resources and could name them (Marimedia, Mariuver). This speaks of the fact that while teaching such disciplines as “The Mari Language” “The History of Culture of Peoples” and other ethno-oriented subjects, we should pay more attention to the Mari web-sites and portals and invite students to collaborate on their improvement.

This time we examined how well are the students aware of the forms of network communication and

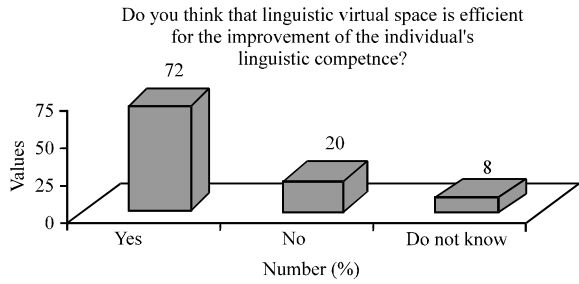


Fig. 11: Efficient utilization of the linguistic virtual space for improving linguistic competence; results of the students' opinion

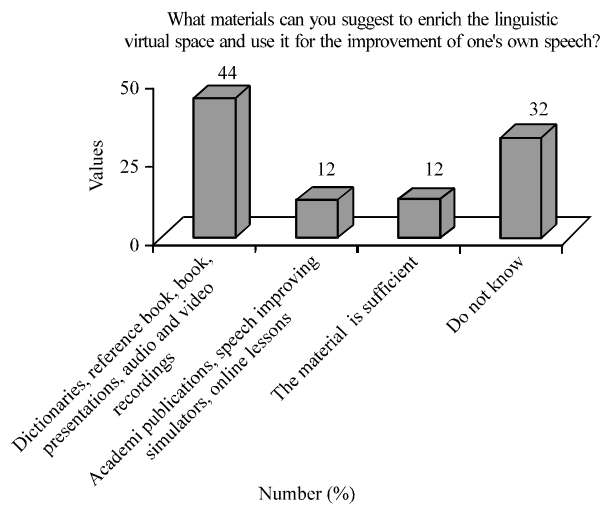


Fig. 12: Suggestions of the electronic resources that could replenish virtual space and help students improve personal speech

whether they use electronic dictionaries in Mari. The 28 students (28%) named social networks as a form of network communication 66 students (66%) neither knew, nor used network communications in Mari; only 6 students (6%) utilize network communications in Mari for video-conferences and message boards. The processed results are reflected on Fig 4.

The 20 students (20%) use electronic dictionaries in the Mari language, 10 students (10%) use occasionally, 70 students (70%) do not use at all. The results are reflected on Fig 5.

The 18 students (18%) gave a positive answer about the Mari Wikipedia and its application. They consult it during their studies of "The History of Culture of Peoples" and of the Mari language. But the majority of students, 82%, are not aware of the Mari Wikipedia and thus don't visit this web-site and don't use it in their studies in Mari. The results are presented in a chart on Fig. 6.

The youth is somewhat aware of the Mari ethno-cultural electronic magazines such as Arslan and Kidsher but not many know of them. The survey revealed that 14 students (14% of the surveyed) have used these magazines at school lessons, have read the information about the Republic Mari El as well as the news and they consider these internet magazines youth-oriented. The 86 students (86%) are unaware of these Mari ethno-cultural electronic magazines. The results of the survey are presented in a chart on Fig 7.

The students who know and have an idea about these magazines generally use them for self-education and personal enrichment. The analysis of the results is shown on Fig 8.

Internet helps students to improve their linguistic competence. 80% of students take advantage of it using electronic books, dictionaries, video and audiofiles. The 2% of the surveyed say they don't have such an opportunity and 18% are not aware of how to use internet in order to improve their linguistic competence. The majority of the surveyed note that these opportunities are generally more available in Russian. This is the opinion of the 96%. Only 4% think that internet can be utilized to improve their linguistic competence of the Mari language. Graphic results are shown on Fig. 9 and 10. Speaking of the general efficiency of the linguistic virtual space in improving the individual's linguistic competence, 72 students (72%) consider it effective and 8 students (8%) could not give any evaluating answer. Only 20 students (20%) think that the linguistic virtual space is not effective in helping to improve the person's linguistic competence but they could not explain why. The results of the survey are presented in on Fig 11.

Students suggest to replenish virtual space with more specific materials which will help them improve personal speech, i.e., dictionaries, reference books, electronic books, presentations, audio and video-records. The 12 students (12%) think that there is enough online information and 32 students (32%) could not answer this question (Fig. 12).

The results of the survey have shown that students either seldom utilize or are completely unaware of the linguistic virtual space, particularly in Mari. Many explain it either by the fact that they don't know Mari or they think there is no big need in utilizing the linguistic virtual space in order to improve their speech. Although, the students of The Federal State Funded Educational Institution of Higher Education "Mari State University" study the Mari language throughout the whole course of their education they hardly even use the electronic dictionary "The Big Mari-Russian Dictionary". Not mentioning other electronic educational resources.

## CONCLUSION

The members of bilingual environment often have certain deviations of verbal communication. This also is a characteristic of bilinguals who live in the bilingual Russian-Mari community. In order to correct the speech deviances we need to use all the possibilities of the environment, including those of the linguistic virtual space. All the more so, it corresponds to the clipping thinking of modern youth as it abounds with bright patterns, diverse and quickly changing information, multitask activity.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The subject of our study is significant but insufficiently developed academically and experientially which implies continued studies in this area. What is required:

- To develop a conception and pattern of utilization of the linguistic virtual space for the correction of speech deviances of the members of bilingual environment in the conditions of the Russian Mari bilingualism
- To develop and approve a program for pedagogical experiment which will help detecting the efficiency of the information and communication technologies, electronic educational resources and linguistic virtual space in general as well as promote, according to the developed conception and pattern, correction of the speech deviances of the Mari-speaking nationals who speak Russian
- To start up and maintain the operation of a web-site "Russian Mari linguistic virtual space"

- To develop and approve the electronic educational resource "Russian-Mari linguistic virtual space for children and adults" and a separate resource "Russian Mari linguistic virtual space for educationalists" which will contain more methodological materials
- To organize a course of educational seminars for the specialists of educational organizations in order to teach them how to utilize the linguistic virtual space for correction of speech deviances of the members of bilingual environment
- To organize academic and practical training for those who are interested in utilizing internet in order to improve their linguistic competence
- To add in the existing internet magazines a column "Russian Mari bilingualism" for the purpose of correction of speech of bilinguals
- To popularize electronic educational resources in order to improve communicational abilities of the members of bilingual environment

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