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Language of Education, Its Importance and Perspectives of the Bilingual Education in Samtskhe-Javakheti

ABSTRACT

The article deals with the importance of language of education and perspectives of bilingual education on the example of Samtskhe-Javakheti region. Non Georgian (mostly Armenian) population of the region have all opportunities to get education in their native language, so they don't have to change their cultural orientation for complete integration. Co-established rule gives them an opportunity to preserve their native language, have adequate knowledge of Georgian as the state official language, of Georgian culture and existing social challenges.

The issue of global bilingualism the formula of which is: English +Native language is supported with the current historical and economical processes. Learning English became actual in Samtskhe-Javakheti. Parents' motivation is defined by the reality that English would help their children to be employed in foreign labor market easily. Here we perform a parallel with the bilingual model existed in the past and in present days also: Russian + Native language and discuss the motivation of choosing the second language.

The theme of bilingual education is in the process of establishing in Georgia. Definitely, this will influence the language situation in Samtskhe-Javakheti as today there are some schools with bilingual teaching.

The article deals with the first results of bilingual teaching and teachers', students' and parents' attitudes towards this issue. With the help of a questionnaire we evaluated the level of development of language skills. Bilingual teaching and reforms of local non Georgian schools are the important instruments for integration.

Key words: Samtskhe-Javakheti, bilingual educations, language of education, integration, motivation, State language.

Education is one of the most active and broad fields. The importance of the language of

education is enormous, especially in such region of Georgia as Samtskhe-Javakheti.

Taking Samtskhe-Javakheti as an example, we will show the importance of the language of education and the perspectives of the bilingual education. In this region, alongside with Georgians, live people of the non-Georgian nationality (mostly Armenians). They are provided all the appropriate conditions to get education in their native language, conditions which accord with their cultural interests such as accessibility to the media, theatre, ability to develop different branches of art in the region in their native language.

The representatives of ethnical minority do not have to change their cultural orientation in order to be completely integrated with the majority. The reality existing in Samtskhe-Javakheti region, the established rules of co-existence give them the opportunity to retain their native language and pass its knowledge to the future generations. The above mentioned also enables them to be adequately prepared to learn Georgian as the State official language and meet the social and cultural challenges.

We consider it useful to speak here about the global bilingualism being practised during the last decades, the formula of which is: English language + native language. In our opinion, extension of this phenomenon was conditioned by development of some historic and cultural processes via which the English language became the most prestigious in almost every part of the world, among language majorities and minorities as well. Naturally,

Georgia is not an exclusion and there also English became the foreign language number one by its importance. Learning English is very topical among the population of Samtskhe-Javakheti, though there are not yet English-Georgian or other European kind of schools or the schools of advanced teaching of English as a foreign language. The schoolchildren are eager to learn, improve and master their English; alongside with the public schools, other learning organizations or tutors help them in achieving these goals. Most of the parents suppose (and not unreasonably) that if their children study English well and reach the high level knowledge this will enable them to be employed in the foreign labor market.

Today, the issue of bilingual education became very actual. Certainly, solving this problem in time will influence the current situation in Samtskhe-Javakheti. In fact, bilingual education in this region means improving learning of Georgian as the official language in the non-Georgian schools. The diverse programs of the bilingual education make this possible. As nowadays there already exist the schools where bilingual teaching is being implemented, we consider it necessary to focus on this issue.

We became familiar with the first results of the bilingual teaching, with the attitudes of teachers, schoolchildren and their parents to this problem. We have used a questionnaire to evaluate the schoolchildren's language skills.

Bilingual teaching and reforming of the non-Georgian schools are the significant instruments to reach integration. It is recommended that every school makes their own voluntary choice..

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„The borders of my language are the borders of my world” (Bleyhl, 2000:7) –this popular quotation by Vigenstein is always viewed in different context and implies generally the interrelations between language and logics but in the age of multi-linguism it obtains a new meaning and becomes more popular. Certainly, we get to know and to settle in that environment which can be involved by our language competencies.

We do not say something new and unusual if we say that language is a mean of communication and in order to identify ourselves in any society knowledge of a language is most important. But as the processes of globalization strengthen, our desire to go abroad to become acquainted with new cultures increase. Though it seems a paradox, actually globalization reminded to large part of the language areas to take care of their languages. Even in the countries where there is no federal division, the inner language problems went ahead. Imagine, even in the target countries for immigration, the language-related interests of the diasporas became important; as an expression of respect to other

languages the native languages of ethnical minorities are taught at Sunday schools and other educational institutions.

From the earliest times, Georgian people have always had good relations with different ethnic groups and with neighboring nations, These relations were conditioned by territorial proximity, cultural and economic ties. The ethno-cultural ties are thus reflected in the structure and lexis of the Georgian language.

Occurrences of the foreign influence clearly show the path of historical development of the Georgian people and social-cultural interrelations with other people, ethnoses, languages. The influences were mutual. Georgian language also contributed in the cultural development of other people. Georgian people always maintained the firm basis of their originality and individuality.

It poses one of the most important problem of linguistic researches to study the language contacts, their peculiarities and regularities. To conduct the researches in this direction became needed because of special topicality of the problem.

. In the process of formation of the twentieth century’s linguistic thought the essential role and function of the language interrelations shaped out clearly. The aim of the given article is to consider language as a mean of education.

Education is certainly one of the most active and wide areas of the language usage.

The importance of education in such region as Samtskhe-Javakheti in Georgia, is enormous. There Georgians and Armenians have been living side by side for many years.

According the data of 2012 total number of population of this region is equal to 208 000. Akhalkalaki municipality stands out for the number of the population - 62 000. The smallest number of population is registered in Aspindza municipality – 12 700. As for ethnic composition Samtskhe-Javakheti is known for large number of Armenian population, namely, in Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda municipalities there the 95% of the total population are Armenians. In the whole region Georgian population is 56% and Armenians – 40%. In the villages of the Ninotsminda municipality there were a number of Russian population. They all belonged to the religious group called “Dukhobori” (in Russian). Only some of them live now in this municipality . From the times of arrival those people made up a separate ethnical group, with own religious and cultural traditions and way of life. (www. http://samcxejavakheti.blogspot.com/p/blog-page_19.html)

Part of the elderly population speaks a Turkish dialect quite well.

In the region with such language diversities, through historic development, surely interrelations of languages were changing as well as their functional distribution. Besides, the cultural dialogues

between the different ethnic groups were and still are of great importance. The problem of bilingualism is one of the major problems in the modern society. It has already become a political issue. Actually bilingualism existed in Georgia for some centuries, but this problem, depending on some political and social factors was solved spontaneously, through change happened in the priorities of the languages. Recently Georgian has become the language of education thus making the problem of bilingual education more topical. Now nobody argues the necessity of scientific approach to the mentioned problem. Exemplified by Samtskhe Javakheti region we show the importance of the language of education and the prospects of bilingual education. Non-Georgian population in our region has all the necessary conditions to receive education in their native language, to satisfy their native cultural interests from the viewpoint of development of media, theatre, and different branches of art.

In the regions with similar problems as in Samtskhe-Javakheti, it is very important to have special focus on the advantages of the cultural education. When adopting the second language actually you adopt the culture different from your native one (though it gradually becomes very close for you like your native) and thus the inter-cultural competencies arise. In such circumstances a person becomes more tolerant towards other cultures and even towards other religious confessions, their

cultural field extends and everything in total will be very helpful in developing the skills to assert oneself in the different cultural society and lead constructive relationships with other ethnic groups; have the skills of co-existence and show solidarity to the representatives of the ethnic groups. In our region the ethnic minorities do not have to change their cultural orientation to become integrated in the majority of population. The reality occurring in Samtskhe javakheti represents the order of co-existence which has been developed through many years and which enables non-Georgian population to maintain and protect their native language for the next generations; besides that, they are able to be adequately prepared to face the challenges of knowing Georgian, be asserted in the social and cultural life.

Today the question of bilingual education arose. Certainly, solving this problem will have some specific influence on the language situation in the region. As there are actually the schools where bilingual learning has been already implemented, we consider it appropriate to pay special attention to this question.

If for many European countries bilingualism mainly means knowing English at the same level as their first language, in Georgia and in some other countries it is related with functioning of the State language on the appropriate level.

In 2010, December 15, some changes were made to the **Law of Georgia on General Education**; the sub- paragraph added to the paragraph 2, according to which multilingual education is that education the goal of which is to develop and advance language knowledge of the schoolchildren in different languages. It implies organizing such teaching in the educational system that will increase effectiveness of teaching different languages and their practical usage. According to the mentioned changes, development of the multilingual education entered the national learning programs and into the functions of the evaluation centre (Law of Georgian on general education, 2005).

We should note from the beginning that we underline the importance of the bilingual education, we support policies of the Ministry of Education - promotion of public integration of the representatives of so called national minorities by implementation multilingual education, the first result of which should be language integration, which generally will be followed by improvement of academic achievements, integration in the society, increased chance of being employed in the labor market. We agree with the suggestion that “despite the fact that talking on the issue of reforming bilingual education began right from the talks on the issue of the State language teaching, we should not forget the main objectives and purpose of bilingual education:

developing balanced bilingualism in every student where there is no place for academic failures and giving the students the possibility to receive education in their native language so that to ensure academic success” (Tabatadze - ტაბატაძე, 2010: 15). This will altogether ensure preparing successful citizens for the country. We conclude anyway that having high level skills in the State language is the most important factor.

Now, when the bilingual models are already in the process of implementing in schools and the basis to solve properly this most significant issue of the educational policy is forming, it should be taken into consideration the steps taken towards learning Georgian as the second language, which have created the basis on which the bilingual modules are surely established.

We got interested to know about the direction and prospects of the change in our region after the State programs are completed. The first issue which we tried to study was motivation, as we consider it number one factor in language learning. We tried to view this issue deep. Generally, motivation is considered “key to successful learning”. D. Uznadze named motive as psychological base of behavior (Uznadze, 1964). There are also cognitive theories of motivation, by which the function of human thinking is put forward (Gogokhia, 2012:270. When classifying

motivation, some types are distinguished, but all of them can be arranged in two main groups – inner motivation and outer motivation. The inner motivation is conditioned by a person’s individual skills, interests, social-cultural characteristics and psychological typology. These are the factors depending on which the person of inner motivation chooses their activity, which in this case is the second language. Outer motivation for choosing the second language consists of many factors and changes in accordance with the social-political, economical, language policy, living conditions and other factors. Generally, the base of outer motivation is desire to achieve success and get integrated in proper society by means of proper knowledge of language. Outer motivation is defined by environment, the impetus from outside.

The goal of research was to show what kind of motivation defines language learning level by the interrogated persons and how they understand the role of bilingual education when learning the first, the second and other languages with high competencies

We were also interested in which foreign languages are preferable in Samtskhe-Javakheti region, which motivations condition choices, requirements for which languages increased and how significant bilingualism is for a person to be employed; what are the results of bilingual lessons and at what extent bilingualism defines the academic success of

the students; at what degree bilingualism is acceptable for non-Georgian population and what has changed since the State programs were implemented in this sphere.

We inquired the parents of the schoolchildren, their teachers and schoolchildren themselves and we used this as the **research method**. One hundred people took part in questionnaire (the schoolchildren, their parents and teachers of Armenian nationality from the villages Kardigami, Tskruti, Pamaji, Khando; the Armenian nationality students of the Samtskhe-Javakheti State University, also Georgian nationality teachers, who work within the State programs in the non-Georgian schools).

The research brought very interesting **results**. All Armenian respondents named Armenian as their first language, most of them named Russian as their second language and 25 people named Georgian as their second language and all of them were high school students or schoolchildren.

The middle aged respondents have medium level knowledge of Georgian as the second language. As for foreign languages young people have medium or good knowledge of English, elderly people have medium knowledge of German and English. as for Turkish, 14 respondents know it well (they are middle age people from Kardigami village). As for the Georgian respondents, if we consider the data according to the age of the respondents

we shall see that the answers differ according the respondent's age – for elderly people the second language is Russian for young it is English; correspondingly, the next place in the hierarchy belongs either to German or to French with the medium level of knowledge. Armenian was named in the fourth place by Georgian teachers, working in Armenian schools. The answer to the question where and how they use those languages show us clearly what kind of motivation conditions language choice by the respondents. We saw integral and instrumental motivations mostly, which belong to outer motivation and the latter is enhanced by inner motivation. The respondents said that the foundation for this motivation was created by the Georgian teachers participating in the State program. They not only introduced Georgian to their pupils but they also managed to introduce them Georgian culture closely and lighten up the routine life in the villages through the new methods and modern way of interactive lessons. These novelties in teaching methods awoke interest and joy to the learning process which positively altered the process to learn the second language and the attitudes not only towards learning Georgian as the State language but to other school disciplines too. As the interrogated teachers confirm, in general, motivation of learning increased and became more topical. This was enhanced by the state programs and by the reality that there emerged the chances to get jobs and become integrated

in the society. The parents' attitudes to learning process generally, has also changed. They see that their children can have opportunity to get education in Georgia. There are more visible material in Georgian language at schools and Georgian national symbols as well. Respectful attitude to the State language is felt. The population of villages who almost never have had any relations with the official institutions, learns Georgian only at school and uses it at the lessons. They suppose that it will be better for the purpose of mastering language skills to have close ties with the Georgian population. The exchange of meetings and several events arranged by the teachers of the second language and by the coordinators serve this purpose very well, but this is not sufficient. Almost all the interrogated people consider learning Georgian as the State language obligatory and they declare that knowledge of the State language enabled them in better learning and having interrelations in the society. The majority of the interrogated people think that knowing Georgian helped them to find jobs in the state structures. Thus, in present days, pragmatic goals condition the motivation of the young people towards mastering any language and those goals mainly are to get jobs or to continue studying abroad. Unlike the elder generation very few of young people mention providing closer insight into culture and literature of the target language, or obtain broader knowledge of this language. Giving preference to English

among other foreign languages is also conditioned by this motivation to have chance of getting job and being successful. Among the non-Georgian population Russian maintains the first position as a foreign language conditioned by motivation to establish communications, to migrate and study or work abroad.

Evaluating this part of research it can be clearly said that choice of the second language is conditioned by inner and by outer motivation as well. Besides that, increasing interest to the State language is also obvious.

As for bilingual education, the interrogated people show positive attitude though only some of them consider themselves as real bilinguals and in their opinion the knowledge obtained at school is not sufficient to master a language. because of the fact that non-Georgian population mainly are compactly inhabited, the pupils at schools are monolingual and Georgian language is only taught at the lessons thus, it cannot be a mean of communication with language speakers.

Most schools have not implemented bilingual lessons or modules yet. After piloting the bilingual programs, bilingual lessons in music and history learning disciplines were implemented. By means of the diglot school books the elements of bilingual teaching are also delivered in social and natural sciences. In the pilot schools the bilingual lessons are mainly delivered also by the teachers of

Georgian. This is caused by scarce teaching resources. The process of implementing integrated lessons(learning the subject and the language simultaneously – the method which is told the best alternative method in Europe) goes on step by step, with some difficulties. Respondents give positive evaluation to the bilingual lessons, considering that this method will help young people to continue their education in universities and different higher educational institutions and will enable them to assert themselves in the society; but the respondents also note that the contents of the subject learnt at such lessons becomes less important and the language learning goes ahead, The pupils learn the terms related to the given subject well, but have very little knowledge of the subject itself. They think that translating the whole contents of the subject is time-consuming.

The respondents reveal discontent with the fact that teaching of Armenian language and history is not paid the attention needed. It should also noted that they suppose that Georgian literature text books are loaded with texts taken from the foreign literature which certainly is important and useful but for the purpose of intercultural education, they prefer the text books containing the literary texts, stories written for children which reflect friendship between Georgian and Armenian people and from which they would be able to

learn culture of the learning language and their traditions.

As for the language of teaching, the majority of the respondents think that continue learning in Armenian language is for them equal to maintaining their national identity. They do not have any choice, as there are only Armenian schools in the villages. They can get education in other language – in this case it is Russian – only in Akhaltsikhe Russian school. They explain that getting education in Russian enables them to continue learning somewhere in Russia or gives chance to be employed. It should be noted that out of 12 graduates (in 2016) only 2 could read and write in Armenian. Others knew their native language only on the local dialect level but neither them nor their parents felt the fear of losing self-identity and fear of being assimilated.

Summarizing the results of research related to biligual education we concluded that special attention should be paid to the attitudes towards bilingual education on one hand and to the teality on the other, which shows itself in this case. It should be noted that according the results of our research these factors show interdiction. In theoretical discussion the respondents give positive evaluation to bilingual education but it is not or cannot be implemented. This especially because for scarcity of the proper resources. We suggest that the students enlisted through the preparatory program of the Georgian language

should be a reliable reserve – their correct professional orientation can condition full accomplishment of the bilingual programs by proper cadres. This situation should be analyzed and right conclusions should be made. It is absolutely necessary to take into consideration the positive attitude of the pupils and the most part of the population; we should take this as a base on which to build the changes – this one side of the issue; as for the second equally important one, it is important that the schools think on the suggested model of bilingual education as a whole, not partially - without seeing its future perspective. As far as we know this issue is being discussed on the

official level and it will soon become possible to offer some models created with regard to Georgian reality to the schools. It is very significant that implementation of the models depend on the free choice of the schools.

We think that education is the way which can properly solve the problems of integration in the multicultural society. In order to achieve this goal the role of a language as the instrument for education is most important. The educational and language policies depend on many factors among which the proper national policy view is the most important.

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