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Language of Education, Its Importance and Perspectives in 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. Non Georgians (Armenians) in the region have all opportunities to get education on 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, be adequate to the state language, Georgian culture and 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 with reality English would help their children to be employed in foreign labour market easily. Here we perform a parallel with the bilingual model existed in the past and today too: -Russian + Native language and discuss the motivation of choosing the second language.

The issue of bilingual education is in the process of establishing in Georgia. It will have a definite influence on language situation in Samtskhe-Javakheti as today there are 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.

It is recommended that multilingual teaching will be based on a voluntary choice of schools .

Key words: *Samtskhe-javakheti, bilingual education, language education, integration, motivation, state language.*

In our opinion, the reason if its actuality is on account of the developed ongoing historical and economical processes in that period, that resulted in becoming English

prestigious worldwide, among language majorities as well as ethnic minorities. The tendency spread out in Georgia too and learning English became quite demanding in

Samtskhe-javakheti either. Mostly, parents believe that if their child learns English well at school it will help them to find jobs easier. Nowadays in Georgia, bilingual education becomes actual though it is still questionable. There is no doubt that in its time it will have a certain effect on existing language situation in Samtskhe-javakheti.

Because of the schools already existing with bilingual instruction, we think there is a need for discussing the issue. We took a deep look at the primary results of bilingual teaching, interested in teachers', students' and parents' attitudes towards the 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. It is recommended that multilingual teaching will be based on a voluntary choice of schools.

"The limits of my language mean the limits of my world" - (Bleyhl, 2000: 7) this popular quote of Wittgenstein is discussed in different context and generally implies the interrelation of language and logic, but in the era of multilingualism it has gained another meaning and has become actual. And it is true that, the world we know and live in would be as rich as our language competences can be. It is quite common that language is an instrument of communication and to be a part of any society it is very

important to learn the relevant language, but the point is that as more the processes of globalization are strengthening, as more we want to go abroad and discover new different cultures.

It is paradox but evident that globalization pushed the world to rethink about their own languages and take care of them. Even in the countries where there are no federal divisions internal linguistic problems were emerged. Moreover, in the targeted countries where people tend to emigrate, the interests of Diasporas regarding language became important.

In respect of minority language and the rights of ethnic minorities who speak in state language, it has started to teach native language through different educational institutions. Georgian people always have relationships with many people around the world or ethnic group. These relationships were determined by geographical situation or cultural-economic cooperation. Ethno cultural contacts were reflected in Georgian language structure and vocabulary. The detection of foreign linguistic layers indicates the historical development of Georgians and their socio-cultural relationships towards different nations. On the other hand, Georgian language has its own contribution in the historical development of other languages. Having regard to the challenges of different cultural

languages, Georgian language played an important role in terms of maintaining independence of Georgian people. Researching the contacts between languages and its specifics is one of the important modern linguistic issues. This problematic issue allowed linguistic researches being done in that direction.

In the process of formation linguistic thinking of 20th century the role and function of contacts between languages were clearly *emphasized. The aim of the following article is to understand the language as an instrument to get education. From the fields of language utilization education is one of the active and diverse sphere. Understanding the language education is extremely important in Samtskhe-javakheti region. Non-Georgian population (Armenians) lives together with Georgians in this region. According to 2012 year data, the population of Samtskhe-javakheti was estimated to be 208 thousand people. Akhalkalaki municipality is the largest city by population, 62 thousand people live there. The fewest people live in Aspindza municipality with 12700 people. By ethnicity the majority of populations in Samtskhe-javakheti region are Armenians. More specifically, there are more than 95% of Armenian population in Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda. Tottaly, 56% of Georgian population and 40% of Armenians live in the region. Doukhobors*

who are a christian religious group of Russian origin settled in Gerogia and lived in the villages of Ninotsminda. Now very few of them live there. From the moment of settlement they were formed as separate ethnographic group with different customs, traditions or way of living (http://samcxejavakheti.blogspot.com/p/blog-page_19.html).

Some of the elders of population know Turkish language. In this kind of linguistically diverse region interrelation of languages and their functional distribution have always changed. Inter-ethnic cultural dialogue was and still is very important. In modern society bilingualism is a problematic issue. It has become a matter of politics. It is true that in Georgia, bilingualism as phenomena existed for centuries, but this problem was solved spontaneously. As far as Georgian language was promoted as language education, bilingual education became particularly actual. There is no debate about the importance and necessity of scientific research and analysis of the problem.

On the example of Samtskhe-javakheti we will discuss about the importance of language education and bilingual education perspectives. In our region non-Georgian population have all the opportunities to get education *on their language, to satisfy their cultural interests in terms of developing*

various fields such as press/media, theatre, art etc. For the regions like Javakheti it is necessary to pay attention to the advantage of bicultural education. Along with the second language acquisition, a learner acquires new culture that is different from her/his own culture and in addition, her/his intercultural competence raises. A learner becomes tolerant towards other cultures and confessions and what is more, her/his cultural space extends, that ultimately helps her/him to gain solidarity and the habits necessary for being part of multicultural society or for achieving cohabitation with various ethnic groups. Here ethnic minorities do not have to change cultural orientation in order to fully integrate with majorities. *The reality in Samtskhe-javakheti and the way of living gives them opportunity to maintain and protect their native language and pass on values to the next generation. Also, this gives them an opportunity to be absolutely adequate and prepared for the social challenges as well as for the challenges of state language and Georgian culture.* Nowadays in Georgia, bilingual education is becoming actual. It is still in the process of development. There is no doubt that in its time it will have a certain effect on existing language situation in Samtskhe-javakheti. Because of the schools already existing with bilingual instruction, we think there is a need for discussing the issue. If for many

European countries bilingualism basically means to know English as well as your native language, here in Georgia (Samtskhe-javakheti) and some other countries it means to promote state language development on a proper level.

In 2010, the amendments were made in the Law on General Education. The subparagraph was added to the second clause according to which multilingual education is "education that aims at developing and deepening language competences of students. This means to develop the instruction in education system that will increase the effectiveness of learning and usage of languages". According to these amendments the development/implementation of multilingual education was added to the functions of National Curriculum and Assessment Center (Law on General Education, 2005). We should mention that we do believe that bilingual education is important. We support the policy of Ministry of Education which promotes civil integration of ethnic minorities through multilingual education. The primary outcome of this process should be the linguistic integration that would eventually lead to the improvement of academic achievements, social integration and increased chance of employment. At the same time we share the opinion which

states: "despite the fact that the discussion on bilingual education reform in Georgia has started because of the problems of state language instruction, we should not forget the main goals & objective of bilingual education: development of balanced bilingualism in students without any academic failure and ensuring the opportunity for students of getting education on their native language in order to provide academic achievements" (Tabatadze, 2010: 15). This facilitates the process of formation of successful citizens and we should admit that proper command of the state language is a decisive factor.

Nowadays when bilingual models are being elaborated at schools and the base is being created in order to solve this very important issue of education policy, we think it is crucial to consider the actions taken during the last period in the instruction of Georgian as a second language. These actions created the basis on which bilingual modules can rely. We interested in what are the perspectives and impacts of the changes in our region after the implementation of the state programs. The first issue we tried to research is motivation, because we think that motivation is the main factor for language instruction. We tried to go deep in that. In general, nowadays motivation is something that considered being the key of successful

learning. D. Uznadze (Uznadze, 1964) called motive as the psychological basis of behavior. There are also the cognitive theories of motivation according which the function of human thinking is the most important (Gogokhia, 2012: 27). When discussing motivation various types of motivation are mentioned. But basically there are two types of motivation: extrinsic and *intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is defined by individual skills, interests, socio-cultural characteristics or psycotype of a person. Considering all these factors, intrinsically motivated person chooses the activity, as in our case - second language. In case of extrinsic motivation, choosing second language depends on many factors and it changes all the time in accordance to social-political, economical situation or the language policy of the country. The principle of extrinsic motivation relates to the desire to achieve success and to integrate better into society through the language. Extrinsic motivation is defined by the environment, in other words by encouragement that comes externally.*

The aim of the research was to identify what kind of motivation defines learning languages by interviewees and how they understand the role of bilingual education in learning first, second and other languages. We also interested in which are the priority foreign languages in Samtskhe-javakheti and

what motivates learners choosing these languages or which languages are popular and how important bilingualism is for employment. In addition, what are the *effects of bilingual education* and how bilingualism defines academic achievement of learners, how acceptable bilingualism is for non-Georgian population and what has changed after the implementation of Georgian language State Programs in that field.

Research methodology **included interviews with parents, teachers and students. Totally 100 interviewees participated in survey research (Armenian students, teachers and parents from the villages of Kardigami, Tskruti, Pamaji, Khando; Armenian students of Samtskhe-javakheti State University; Georgian teachers working in non-Georgian schools through state programs).**

The research results were quite interesting. The language hierarchy for Armenian respondents is the following: first language is Armenian and second language is Russian for majorities. Only 25 interviewees (basically students and pupils) name Georgian as their second language. Middle aged respondents have average command of Georgian as a second language. From foreign languages youngsters have average and good command of English whereas elders have average command of

German and English languages. 14 interviewees who basically are the middle aged population of village Kardigami know Turkish well.

As for the Georgian participants of survey, their responses were different according to their age. Mostly Russian is a second language for elders whereas English is for youngsters. Accordingly, in language hierarchy German or French are on third place in terms of average level of language knowledge. Georgian teachers who work in Armenian school named Armenian as a fourth language. We asked respondents to tell us how and where they used languages. Their responses have made clear understanding of which type of motivation defines choosing languages by respondents/learners. Integral and instrumental types of motivation have arisen, which are considered being as extrinsic motivation. This kind of motivation, on the other hand, is empowered by *intrinsic motivation and as interviewees believe, Georgian language teachers who are involved in state program are considered to be the reason of this. They not only taught their students Georgian language but got them closer to Georgian culture as well. By doing so, these Georgian language teachers have brought a new perspective to the village which resulted in developing the newest*

instructional methods and creating modern interactive lessons.

New instructional methods and various interesting activities created the strong interest and joy of learning that on the other hand has changed the attitude towards learning not only Georgian as a second language but in general other learning disciplines as well. Teachers state that the attitude towards learning has changed generally and became more actual. State programs played an important role in that process. Besides, the employment and integration perspectives seem to have appeared. Parents' attitude toward learning has also changed as they realized that their children have a chance to get education in Georgia. Georgian visual materials and symbols have appeared in schools and Georgian state language has a great deal of respect now. Populations of villages who do not have any communication with Georgians basically have to learn Georgian language at schools and only use the language there. They think that communications with Georgians would be very helpful and good for language acquisition. The exchange meetings and events organized by Georgian as a second language teachers and coordinators are very important and helpful but not enough. Nearly all respondents of the survey believe that Georgian as a state language should be a mandatory language.

They say that because of their knowledge of state language they can get education, learn something and communicate with public/society. The majority of respondents think that when working at state institutions they would not have any impediments/barriers in case of knowing Georgian language. So we could say that the motivation of modern youth to learn languages is supported by pragmatic aims. As a reason of their decision to learn languages, a few of them, as opposed to the elders, name a desire of deepening the knowledge or getting to know other culture/literature. Choosing English is also supported by the chance to get a job successfully. When evaluating this part of the survey, obviously we could state that the motive for choosing second language is related to the extrinsic as well as *intrinsic motivation. In terms of that, we could also talk about the growing interest of learning state language.*

As for bilingual education, respondents showed a positive attitude toward it, though only a few consider themselves bilinguals and think that the skills and competence developed at school are not enough. Due to the compact residence of non-Georgian population, there are yet no bilingual students and bilingual classes at schools. After piloting programs bilingual lessons are being conducted in history and music. By

providing bilingual textbooks the elements of bilingual lessons are also integrated in social and natural subjects. In piloting schools bilingual lessons are mostly being conducted with the support of Georgian language teachers. The reason of that is the lack of learning resources.

Integrated lesson, in other words content and language integrated learning is developing here step by step. This alternative approach in Europe is considered to be the best for learning foreign language. The respondents of the survey positively *assessed the bilingual lessons. They believe that it will enable young people to continue studying at universities and will help them to integrate better into society. On the other hand, respondents have mentioned that the content of the subject often misfocused on bilingual lessons as learning language comes in the first place. Eventually, children know the specific terms and have lack of knowledge in subjects. They think that translation of the content is time-consuming process on bilingual lesson.*

Respondents also complained about not paying proper attention to the teaching of Armenian language and history. According to the opinion of interviewees it is truly important that the textbooks of Georgian literature cover the works of foreign authors but in terms of intercultural education together with these works, it is better to cover

literary texts as well that representing the friendship of Armenian and Georgian nations and the stories for children.

As for language of instruction, the majority of the respondents think that choosing Armenian as a language of instruction means to maintain their national identity. Though they can only study in other language, in our case in Russian in Russian school in Akhaltsikhe. The main reason why they choose Russian as a language of instruction is the real chance to continue studying or get a job in Russia.

After analyzing the research results of multilingual education we could come to a conclusion that attitude toward bilingual education should be emphasized. On the other hand we should think about the reality we face during implementation of bilingual education. According to the research results these two factors seem to be very problematic. Theoretically speaking, the interviewees show positive attitude toward bilingual education but in practice it cannot be achieved. Particularly this happens because of the relevant human resources are not available. In terms of that, we believe that the ethnic minority students, the students who entered the universities through Georgian language program would become a valuable workforce. Their right professional orientation might guarantee to fill the gaps in human resources of bilingual programs at

schools of the region. It is necessary to deeply analyze the existing situation and make conclusions. Taking into account the positive attitudes of the students is also important. Making real changes happen is one side of an issue. The second and also very important point is that the schools should understand the concrete model of multilingual education in full context and not in parts without analyzing the perspective.

As we know this issue is being discussed in state institutions and soon it will be possible to offer schools several models

developed by considering Georgian reality. In addition, it will be really important that the implementation of the model would be based on the choice of a school.

In our view, education is the way of effectively solving integration related problems in multicultural society. For that purpose language serves as an important tool of education. The impact of language and education policy depends on various factors especially on a right vision statement of the country.

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