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MULTILINGUAL RESEARCH: CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the research is to find out the peculiarities of the concept MULTILINGUALISM as one of the key components of the conceptual sphere LANGUAGE POLICY. The first part of the article concentrates on defining the key notions of the research: *language policy,* the instrument serving as the regulator for the functioning of several languages on the particular territory, and *multilingualism*, the speaker's ability to speak several languages and the co-existence of several languages within a particular geographical territory. As language policy is a multidimensional notion, in terms of cognitive linguistics it is considered to be a conceptual sphere, with MULTILINGUALISM being one of its core concepts. The second part of the article deals with the detailed analysis of the frame structure of the concept MULTILINGUALISM as one of the key components of the conceptual sphere LANGUAGE POLICY. Analysing cognitive features of *multilingualism* as a phenomenon, we single out the slots composing the frame structure of the concept MULTILINGUALISM and single out the lexical units representing each of the slots in the modern English language. We come to the conclusion that the conceptual sphere LANGUAGY POLICY is very multisided and includes a number of other concepts requiring further consideration.***Key words:*** *multilingualism, multilingual research, linguistic perspective, psycholinguistic perspective, sociolinguistic perspective.*

Key words: *globalization, internationalization, language policy, multilingualism, frame structure, slot, cognitive feature.*

Introduction

Nowadays, it is hardly possible to imagine our life without communication in its broadest sense. This interaction occurs both on national and international levels. In order to make the process of communication successful, one must be aware of some linguistic, cultural and political issues.

Language policy is the point where linguistics meets politics. The so-called *linguistic legislation* serves as a medium

through which the information is successfully and correctly transferred from one speech community to another. The language here serves as a means of communication, the key component that makes the communication possible as such.

Modern Europe is characterized by linguistic diversity that is why it pays special attention to the phenomenon of multilingualism, which, as well as the other linguistic processes has to be controlled and regulated by the instruments of language policy.

Theory

One of the most significant and all-embracing features of the modern world are *globalization* and *internationalization*. Due to their peculiarities, they are unavoidably constructing a new sociolinguistic situation. In order to keep this situation under control and be able to deal with its consequences, we need to understand its very essence and regulate its influence on language.

This is what *language policy* is concerned with. Many countries design their own language policy in order to favor or discourage the use of a particular language or set of languages. Language policy deals with official efforts to affect the relative status and use of one or more

languages. Language policies of one sort or another have featured in human history from the earliest times (Burnaby, 2015). The history knows the examples when some nations have used language policies as a tool for promoting one official language at the expense of other. However, nowadays, the language policies of many countries are aimed at protecting and promoting regional and ethnic languages whose viability is threatened. In other words, language policy is what a government does either officially through legislation, court decisions or policy to determine how languages function, cultivate language skills needed to meet national priorities or to establish the rights of individuals or groups to use and maintain languages.

It should be noted that where languages or their varieties are endangered, language policy often takes the form of specific ideologies that underlie language planning strategies. Its goals may be specific and practical in nature, such as orthographic reform, or more emblematic, such as measures for the promotion and protection of vulnerable languages (Grenoble, 2013).

The overview of theoretical literature dedicated to the analysis of the essence and components of language policy makes it

possible to state that it is a very wide notion which includes a number of different understandings. Some of them will be presented in the current paper.

Some linguists equate the notion *language policy* to the practical measures of the state dealing with the status of the state language, its functions, protection of monopolistic use of the state language in the most important social spheres, regulations of the use of local languages. In this context, the state language is considered to be the dominating one and language policy is regarded as the deliberate attempt to change an individual's or community's use of a language or languages or a variety or varieties.

Another point of view suggests that language policy is all the decisions taken by the state or a social body aimed at using one or several languages on the real or virtual territory and regulating the process of their functioning (Russo, 2007, p. 97).

Some nations include a language policy in their constitution. For example, France declared French as its official language in amending its constitution before it joined the European Community in 1992, and many Arab countries combine a statement about Arabic as their national language alongside their proclamation of Islam as their official religion. Other

countries have established language laws outside of their constitutions. For example, New Zealand, where English is dominant, has laws making Maori and New Zealand Sign Language official languages along with English (Spolsky, 2011, p. 1).

However, in terms of the present research the attention is concentrated specifically on the European language policy. Europe is characterized by the high proportion of people with multilingual skills. It is claimed that more than half of Europeans speak more than one language, and three quarters want their children to learn English.

As part of its efforts to promote mobility and intercultural understanding, the EU has designated language learning as an important priority, and funds numerous programmes and projects in this area. Multilingualism, in the EU's view, is an important element in Europe's competitiveness. One of the objectives of the EU's language policy is therefore that every European citizen should master two other languages in addition to their mother tongue (Language Policy, 2016).

It is necessary to point out that linguistic diversity is a key property of Europe's identity, and both the EU Institutions based in Brussels and the Council of Europe (CoE) based in

Strasbourg have been active in promoting language learning and multilingualism/plurilingualism. The major language policy agencies in these two institutions are the Unit for Multilingualism Policy within the Directorate-General of Education and Culture in the European Commission and the Language Policy Unit of the Directorate of Education in the Council of Europe.

Multilingualism is a common and increasing phenomenon in a present day society which can be studied from different perspectives. The CoE makes a distinction between plurilingualism as a speaker's competence (ability to use more than one language) and multilingualism as the presence of various languages in a given geographical area. The EU uses multilingualism for both (sometimes specifying 'multilingualism of the individual') (Multilingual Europe, 2008, p.14).

Besides, multilingualism is one of the competences that a modern specialist should possess in order to be successful in his career. This idea has been a central one in the European policy since the very beginning of the European Union existence. However, the first official guidelines on multilingualism were highlighted by the European Commission only in 2005.

It is worth emphasizing that a way towards multilingualism is a set of actions aimed at supporting educational programs; it presupposes learning at least two foreign languages and performing activities aimed at preserving language diversity, increasing the time for learning foreign languages. Not a single official document mentions obligatory learning of one particular language. As a result, the language policy of every state should be balanced and reasonable. The language totalitarianism is impossible in our modern multinational global community.

As a democratic organisation, the EU has to communicate with its citizens in their own language. The same goes for national governments and civil services, businesses and other organisations all over the EU. Europeans have a right to know what is being done in their name. They must also be able to play an active part without having to learn other languages.

As for our research, we understand multilingualism to be the presence of various languages in a given geographical area, and consider this very definition to be the key one for the present paper. Besides, it is one of the major components within language policy.

However, it should be mentioned that, from the point of view of linguistics, language policy is much broader than just a notion. It is a mental structure that embraces a number of components, aspects and associations formed as a result of studying this phenomenon and experiencing it.

In terms of cognitive linguistics, LANGUAGE POLICY may be considered a *conceptual sphere*, a set of semantic, conceptual and associative characteristics, actualizing its constituting concepts (Pugach, 2015, p.859). The concept, in its turn, is understood as an integrator of consciousness, language system and culture, consequently providing their access to the communicative and discursive levels (Berlin, 1999, p. 270).

Following these definitions and considering the fact that language policy regulates the use of various languages (multilingualism) by particular people within a particular territory, we may state that in terms of cognitive linguistics MULTILINGUALISM may be considered as a concept within the conceptual sphere LANGUAGE POLICY.

Method

In the process of the research, several methods of linguistic and conceptual analysis have been applied. In order to single out the linguistic units that would serve as the factual material for our research, a continuous sampling method was used. The next step was to clear up the definition of every linguistic unit, so we used the structural methods (method of dictionary definitions analysis and componential method).

Later on, we applied the conceptual method of analysis, in particular the method of frame analysis, lying in composing the frame structure of the concept MULTILINGUALISM as a component of the conceptual sphere LANGUAGE POLICY. The frame structure of the concept consists of several slots, each representing a particular mental feature of the concept MULTILINGUALISM.

Discussion and Results

In order to compose the frame structure of the concept MULTILINGUALISM as one of the components of the conceptual sphere LANGUAGE POLICY, we have analysed more than thirty definitions of

multilingualism as a linguistic phenomenon.

The analysis of factual material makes it possible to single out ten core cognitive features of the concept MULTILINGUALISM as a component of the conceptual sphere LANGUAGE POLICY: *'Multilingual Education'; 'Speaker's Competence'; 'Something Having a Specific Purpose'; 'Means of (Inter)cultural Communication'; 'Coexistence of Several Languages in One Specific Territory'; 'Something Containing Specific Components'; 'Means of Internationalization in Europe'; 'Something Presupposing the Existence of Lingua Franca (English)'; 'A Phenomenon Caused by Specific Factors'; 'Something Attracting People's Attention'*. Each of the features has means of its verbal representation in modern English and may be considered the central one for every slot within the frame structure of the concept under review.

The analysis of the factual material allows us to state that the most numerous slot representing the frame structure of the concept MULTILINGUALISM in the modern English language is the one containing the cognitive feature *education*. These lexical units compose the first slot entitled as MULTILINGUAL

EDUCATION. According to the works of scholars, who investigate the presence of a multilingual component in the curriculum of modern educational institutions, "…development of multilingual education programs aiming to promote language proficiency in more than two languages is becoming increasingly widespread…" (Bernaus, p. 87-88). The analysed material has shown that this slot is verbalized by twenty-four lexical units, such as *the role of relative language status on the attitudes, motivation and multilingual competence of students; support language learning; to incorporate other languages and other varieties of English into the classrooms and the curriculum; to create multilingual displays and signs; to compare how various languages express ideas; to produce dual-language versions of projects and assignments; to encourage students to consult adults; educational language planning; studies of grammatical aspects of bilingual speech; L2 language learning and use; L2 acquisition; adoption of L2 words and underlying concepts into the L1* and others.

The next slot forming the frame structure of the concept MULTILINGUALISM as a component of the conceptual sphere LANGUAGE POLICY is the one united by the mental

feature *competence* and represent the slot that we call SPEAKER'S COMPETENCE (twenty-three lexical units): *multilingual and bilingual usage; fluency, balance and switching; individually multilingual citizens; experiential world of one's native language; to inhabit two different worlds at once; bicultural bilinguals; distinct conceptual representations; ability to possess a repertoire of languages and language varieties; ability to use several languages to varying degrees and for distinct purposes* etc.

As any other socially important phenomenon, multilingualism has its own content and purpose of its existence: *"...multilingualism should help to promote tolerance and a better understanding amongst Europeans, to prepare people to live in a multicultural society, to equip citizens to participate in public life, to strengthen social cohesion and solidarity, while at the same time mitigating the spread of xenophobia and parochialism among current and future generations"* (Lasagabaster, p. 234).

The data under analysis showed that there are quite a lot of lexical units (fifteen) verbalising the slot CONTENT OF MULTILINGUALISM. These lexical units are united by the cognitive component *Something Having a Specific Purpose*: *to

serve as aids to cross-group understanding; to link up about common interests, needs and concerns across languages and communities; to prepare people to live in a multilingual society; to develop interculturality; to develop greater openness to new cultural experiences; to develop the complex but unique competence in social communication* and others.

The same number of lexical units (fifteen) composes the fourth slot of the concept MULTILINGUALISM that we named MEANS OF (INTER)CULTURAL COMMUNICATION united by the cognitive component *intercultural communication*: *connection across cultural assumptions and values; complex sociolinguistic features; essential condition for intercultural communication; cultural enrichment; a person, viewed as a social agent, has proficiency, of varying degrees, in several languages and experience of several cultures* etc.

One of the most common features the concept MULTILINGUALISM possesses is *the presence of various languages in a given geographical area* [Multilingual Europe, p.14]. This very cognitive feature is an integral one for the fifth slot forming the frame structure of the concept MULTILINGUALISM, entitled as

COEXISTENCE OF SEVERAL LANGUAGES IN ONE SPECIFIC AREA (fifteen lexical units): *minority languages; majority languages; a situation in which different languages are in contact; bilingual region; linguistic diversity; multilingual societies* and so on.

The sixth slot of the frame structure which we entitled as SOMETHING CONTAINING SPECIFIC COMPONENTS represents essential components contained within the concept MULTILINGUALISM and those phenomena which are closely connected to it. This slot is represented in the English language by thirteen lexical units, for example *codeswitching; codemixing; bilingualism; lingua franca* etc.

The next cognitive feature which unites lexical units of the seventh slot is *the importance of multilingualism for Europe.* This slot is called MEANS OF INTERNATIONALIZATION IN EUROPE and is verbalized by means of eight lexical units, such as *expanding phenomenon in Europe; help to promote tolerance and a better understanding amongst Europeans; to touch the very substance of European identity; asset for Europe and a shared commitment* and so on.

Although the role of multilingualism has become essential for the contemporary world, *"it is English that so often serves as a means of making connections across cultural assumptions and values which, in the absence of a common language of interaction, would otherwise be impossible"* (Seidlhofer, p. 134-135). This very thought lies in the cognitive core of the next slot SOMETHING PRESUPPOSING THE EXISTENCE OF LINGUA FRANCA (ENGLISH) which is represented in modern English by six lexical units, for instance *'extraterritorial' lingua franca throughout Europe; a language of wider communication; common language for economic globalization; integral part of the professional lives; predominance of English as a language for learning; a medium of communication.*
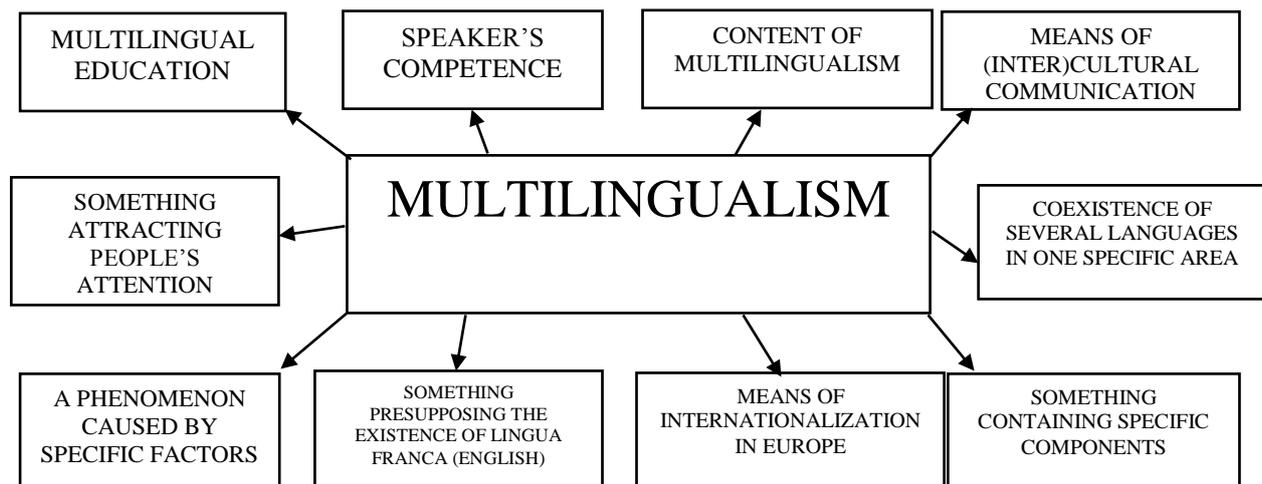
There had been several factors that caused genesis of multilingualism. John Edwards, American researcher, states that it is *"a powerful fact of life around the world, a circumstance arising, at the simplest level, from the need to communicate across speech communities"* (Edwards, p. 1). The analysis of factual material allowed us to include three more lexical units verbalizing the concept MULTILINGUALISM which have been united into the slot entitled as A PHENOMENON CAUSED BY SPECIFIC

FACTORS: *the need to communicate across speech communities; scholarly and diplomatic interaction and exchange; great awareness of the need to speak foreign languages.*

The last slot representing the frame structure of the concept MULTILINGUALISM is called SOMETHING ATTRACTING PEOPLE'S ATTENTION and consists of three lexical units: *a marker of high status; establishment of attitudes towards the different languages, the speakers of these*

languages and the learning process itself; to communicate a positive attitude towards linguistic diversity.

Taking into consideration the above mentioned, we may graphically represent the frame structure of the concept MULTILINGUALISM consisting of ten slots in the following way:

MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION	SPEAKER'S COMPETENCE	CONTENT OF MULTILINGUALISM	MEANS OF (INTER)CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

MULTILINGUALISM

SOMETHING ATTRACTING PEOPLE'S ATTENTION			COEXISTENCE OF SEVERAL LANGUAGES IN ONE SPECIFIC AREA

A PHENOMENON CAUSED BY SPECIFIC FACTORS	SOMETHING PRESUPPOSING THE EXISTENCE OF LINGUA FRANCA (ENGLISH)	MEANS OF INTERNATIONALIZATION IN EUROPE	SOMETHING CONTAINING SPECIFIC COMPONENTS

Conclusion

Thus, we may sum up that multilingualism is an indispensable component of modern European language policy, which pierces through every sphere of human activity. As it has been mentioned above, language policy is a medium through which the information is successfully and correctly transferred from

one speech community to another. It has been shown that this phenomenon is very complicated and multidimensional. This is the reason why we decided to consider it a conceptual sphere and analyse it from the point of view of cognitive linguistics.

However, the conceptual sphere LANGUAGE POLICY is so broad that it requires a lot of efforts in order to be

understood and mentally interpreted. It is so wide, that it cannot be fully analysed within one paper. Except for MULTILINGUALISM, it contains a number of other equally important concepts that will be researched in our further papers.

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