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ABSTRACT

Many scholars have investigated bullying as a social problem in educational institutions. However, just a few scientific works are available attempting to offer the analysis of the linguistic peculiarities related to bullying in school discourse. Since bullying is a violative act expressed verbally or physically to intimidate members of particular society, it is important to consider the linguistic features directly related to the language used by aggressors to harm victims. Consequently, in the present paper, we will explore certain verbal register (words, phrases, linguistic patterns, etc.) generally used by aggressors to insult, threaten or harm victims.

Keywords: bullying, aggressors, victims, school discourse.

Introduction

Although, number of preventive decisions have been made in education system to ensure a safe learning environment at schools, physical and psychological violence still remains among the unsolved problems in the general education system. For example, bullying is still a problem in schools. Some students are often victims of negative influences from their peers or other members of school community. Forms of bullying vary according to students' age and background. Victims of Bullying can be both - male and female. Consequently, any child can become either an initiator of aggression or a victim.

Bullying as a social phenomenon is also characteristic in organizational contexts too. In all the contexts, including educational institutions, the purpose of bullying is to intimidate and subordinate individuals. As mentioned, any person can become the object of bullying. However, those individuals who are somehow different from dominant groups, are at greater

risk of bullying. The risk group may also include individuals with difficulties in communication and poorly developed social skills. At the same time, those ones who belong to religious or ethnic minorities.

In scientific literature, bullying refers to the physical and psychological aggression to intimidate individuals. Originally it was a concept of everyday life but over time it became the object of research in sociology, psychology and pedagogy. Scandinavian scientists were the first ones who expressed interest in this problem (Heinemann, 1973; Olweus, 1973; Pikas, 1989). Strong social interest in bullying first appeared in Sweden in the 1970s. The Swedish physicist Heinemann (1973) used the term "mobbing" in the context of racial discrimination. He borrowed this term from the work of famous Austrian ethologist Konrad Lorenz. Lawrence used mobbing to express the facts of attacking a group of animals to other different species. As for Heinemann (1973), he uses the term "mobbing" to describe an attack of one group of people to other groups. The scientific research of bullying was first done by the Swedish scholar Dan Olweus. Olweus uses the term "bullying" in many of his works (Olweus, 1973, 1978), describing one or more people attacking other people. As he states, vulnerable students are bullied by one or more individuals for a long time. So, aggressive or negative actions cause harm to the victims (Olweus, 1973).

Research Methodology

The following research includes the quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. The survey was used to get the whole picture of the problem and the final analyses was done on the basis of individual and group interviews and focus groups. More specifically, we interviewed 9th Grade students, teachers and school masters at Gallatin High School in Montana, the USA and N15 Public school in Batumi, Adjara region, Georgia. Comparative analysis was based on the data gathered from the participants of both schools.

Results and Discussion

In order to analyze verbally expressed bullying as a threatening phenomenon, it is essential to study its linguistic features, i.e. to find contextual and linguistic markers of bullying. This

allows to identify the author's intention. Since verbal expression of bullying is a verbal act between individuals, the verbal nature of aggression cannot be defined without a context. The context defines language as a socio-semantic system that reflects the beliefs and values of individuals in a particular environment. Accordingly, this paper explores various examples of verbal bullying (words, phrases and sentences of intimidation); offers linguistic analysis of the forms of verbal bullying which are typical expression in general education institutions in Georgia and the United States. In particular, the paper presents the linguistic techniques used by the aggressors to realize their intentions towards victims.

For comparative analysis, the research was conducted at Batumi N15 Public School and at Gallatin High School in Montana, the United States. The participants were Georgian and American students aged 13-15 from both Georgian and American schools. Additionally, teachers and school principals were interviewed from both schools to illustrate a problem in a better way.

As the research shows, victim can be anyone with differences from the norms existing in a particular society. In Georgian cases, as the research participants state, aggressors use insulting and derogatory words to people who are physically different from others:

Georgian Student: *"...overweight girls are often addressed by boys: რას გავხარ, ძროხა! (You look like a cow!). As for overweight boys, they are insulted by the words like ლორივით ხარ ჩასუქებული (you are as fat as a pig!). Brunette girls or boys are often called ზანგი (Negro). And unattractive girls or boys are addressed by a word მახინჯი (ugly) ... "*

Similar to Georgian reality, some of the provocative factors of bullying in American schools are physical differences such as skin color, weight, height, etc.

American Student: *"...Actually, I do not remember many words, but there are cases when black students are called Negroes. And as for overweight students, aggressors call them **fatty, lump, tub, porker, fatso**. I think that's all I can say about..."*

Based on the answers of Georgian and American students participating in the interview, in Georgian context, individuals are humiliated by aggressors with various metaphors and comparisons due to their excessive weight. In particular, a victim is compared to an animal

which is perceived as degrading meaning by the addressee. The above-mentioned words, in addition to their derivative meanings, have negative connotative meanings in the youths subculture. They are perceived to have insulting attitude toward victims. As for the existing slangs used to overweight students in the American context, they do not contain comparisons of humans to animals. However, each slang is associated with an excess of something. For example: **fatso** -offensive meaning: a fat person– by Merriam Webster; **lump**- a person who is heavy and awkward - by Merriam Webster; **tub** – a fat person - by Merriam Webster.

In a Georgian school where the participants were interviewed there were no black students. However, degrading slang: **ჭანჭი** (Negro) is often used to insult brunette students. It is important to note that the Georgians do not perceive this slang as painful as American students (because of few cases of racism in history of Georgia). On the other hand, for African-American students the same slang word "**Negro**" has a dramatically negative and offensive connotation.

Due to lower social status, some students do not often receive respect and recognition from others. Low financial opportunities of families often affect the quality of their children's clothing. Some families cannot afford to buy trendy cloths for their children. These

categories of students are often bullied by their peers through calling nicknames or other insulting words.

Principal of Georgian Public School: *"...honestly, I have thought about the reason of bullying a lot. One of them is socially vulnerable category of students. Because of their social conditions, they might not wear fashionable or trendy cloths, so that they become victims of bullying from their peers..."*

After the collapse of the Soviet system, school uniforms are no longer mandatory in Georgian secondary schools. It should be noted that students' clothing style as a visual category of physical difference often becomes the reason for bullying. In particular, victims of bullying are individuals of both sexes who, (due to their social status), cannot wear trendy clothes compared to their peers.

Georgian student: *"...I think, students can be dressed in a way they want to. As I know in the past, all the students wore uniforms at school, but we do not have this requirement today*

and that is why, we all go to school dressed differently. However, as a result, children often insult each other. For example, my classmates often call others names like „ბომჯო” (vagrant) or ცოგანო "gypsy" because of the way they dress.”

As the research shows, students' dressing-style is one of the provocative factors of bullying in Georgian context. The Russian acronym **БОМЖ** (без определенного места катольства) is used to address a homeless person distinguished from others by wearing dirty clothes and seeking food in litter bin. The meaning of the word **БОМЖ** has been expanded in the youth subculture. It is used as a slang to mock a student with the motive of bullying. The word -**ცოგანო** (insulting word for gypsy) is also a discriminatory term against the gypsy community. The negative connotation of the word **ცოგანო** refers to some gypsy children wearing dirty clothes and begging in the streets. Therefore, addressing word **ცოგანო** to a person causes negative feelings. Additionally, the victims of bullying in Georgian schools are those students who wear different style of clothing (extravagant, trendy, etc.) to attract the attention of others.

Georgian student: *"...those girls who dress extravagantly are often insulted by boys calling them **bitches** or ironically, **აჟ რა მკაგარი ნაშაა**" (what a cool **bit of skirt she is**).*

Conditioned by a big influence of the English language, bullies at Georgian schools frequently use barbarisms towards victims. For example, the slang word "bitch" and "Nasha" (meaning a prostitute woman) are the examples used by Georgian students.

The use of *irony* is one of the linguistic means while expressing bullying verbally. The realization of intended *irony* depends on the presupposition of context. Presupposition plays a big role in perceiving and decoding the irony. In order to achieve intention and make a certain impact on the listeners, aggressor expresses his thoughts through ironic vocabulary.

It is important to note that bullying based on dressing style is not only in Georgian context, but it also occurs in American reality:

American Student: *"...There is no bullying on a boys' appearances or clothing style. Honestly, students do not insult each other because of their choices or taste of the clothes they wear. However, I have heard words like **whore, slut, hoe** towards girls who dress up attractively..."*

As research shows, American students think that clothing style is not provocative factor

of bullying. However, bullying occurs in some cases when girls dress extravagantly. There are facts when attractively dressed girls are addressed with the words: **whore** (a person who engages in sexual intercourse for pay-by Merriam Webster), **slut** (someone who has many sexual partners—usually used of a woman - by Merriam Webster), **hoe** (generally a woman, who is promiscuous- by Merriam Webster). These words are slangs with the negative connotation meaning an immoral woman. Consequently, calling girls these slang words by the aggressors serves to humiliate the victims.

In the paper we looked at the role of socialization in shaping values while developing a child as a person. In these processes an individual develops the habits and shares social norms existing in a particular society. Therefore, he/she gains knowledge, values and norms that are characteristic for a particular society. The complexity of norms and beliefs in a society determine the gender roles perceived by individuals. In this regard, it is important to analyze the context in which men and women are assigned different roles.

Gender role in any society is defined by socio-cultural norms and implies behaviors of a man and a woman in different cultures. It is important to mention that, perception of gender roles in the society is one of the major reasons of school bullying. Gender-based bullying refers to violence against a person with a different appearance and manners than expected by a particular society. Disobedience to the dogmatic frameworks imposed by society becomes the cause of aggression.

Georgian student: *„... we are 28 students in our group, among us are those who often oppress others. Mostly boys physically abuse other boys who study well or do not go out to smoke with them. Also aggressors bully those boys who have friendly relationship with girls. They also oppress physically weak boys who do not have masculine behavior. Such students are called "gay" or „ცობფეო“ (insulting slang for a gay).*

American student: *“... the most common words I would say are **fag** or **faggot** used for the LGBTQ people, mostly to insult them...”*

In this particular situation, it is interesting to compare the slangs in Georgian and English contexts. For example, in the American context, the word "gay" does not have an abusive

connotation if used for a person who considers himself as a member of this community. However, if a person is a member of a society of traditional sexual orientation, naturally, he will not have acceptance of the word “gay”. Despite a person's sexual orientation, the words **fag** and **faggot** (a gay person — used as a term of abuse and disparagement - by Merriam Webster) are considered derogatory. As for the slang used in the Georgian context, „ცისფერი”, is used to humiliate homosexuals and people with gender-inappropriate appearance in a society.

Expressing the respect for different views/beliefs is a core priority of modern education systems. Georgian law supports students to express their thoughts freely and, on the other side, obligates all members of school community to respect the opinions of others: “... *the student has the right to express his / her opinion and demand its respect ...*” (Georgian Law on General Education, article 1330).

Although acceptance of different opinions in the social formation of modern human being is one of the main goals of teaching. The existence of different opinions still remains the reason of bullying among students. This problem has been confirmed by the principal of Georgian school participating in the interview: “... *Students with different opinions may be more often victims of bullying than students with physical disabilities. In my opinion, today's generation has much more acceptance towards disable students but not with those who have critical and different opinions...*”

Georgian Student “... *generally, when a teacher asks questions to students, most frequently only the same students give answers. Their answers are sometimes incorrect or illogical, but no one insults them for that. On the other side, some students are constantly silent. If they answer teacher's questions and have a wrong answer, or express different opinions, others will often make remarks to them, such as: ხისთავა (woodenheaded), დებილი (stupid), სულელი (fool), იდიოტი (idiot), etc.*”

All the above-mentioned slangs are perceived abusive by individuals who are victims of bullying. The words: **ხისთავა** (woodenheaded), **დებილი** (stupid), **სულელი** (fool), **იდიოტი** (idiot) are associated with mental retardation.

American student: „...*Respect for different opinions is essential, however, students who have*

*different opinions or views on a particular issue are called: **nerd, retard, dope, doofus, poser...**“*

In Georgian and American school contexts, the words discussed above have the negative connotation used towards students with different opinions. For example, the English word **nerd** is a slang used for an intelligent but highly asocial person. The word **retard** in its derivative sense means delay. However, in bullying, the word has derogatory content meaning intellectual disability. The main meaning of the English word **dope** is illicit drug (marijuana or heroin), although in abusive context the meaning of the word is different and means a *stupid* or *irritating* person. The literary meaning of the slang word **doofus** is a incompetent person. **Poser** - as a slang is used to humiliate people who behave differently from others to gain attention from people.

As the studies have shown, despite existing legislation and various preventive activities, bullying remains one of the unresolved problems at schools. Identification and solution of its reasons require in-depth analysis of bullying as a phenomenon considers not only raising awareness about bullying, but also its linguistic analysis. That also means how lexical items are formulated and used by school community in school contents.

General Conclusions

Based on the research conducted, the following can be concluded: bullying in educational discourse is not an individual but a social phenomenon. It is widespread in everyday communication. Expressing bullying in both Georgian and English-languages is characterized by the use of insulting words and phrases. Such expressions have the greatest number of scabrous words, barbarisms, irony, metaphors, acronyms, slangs, etc. In contrast to the American context, abnormal vocabulary (dysphemisms) is much more commonly used in Georgian school discourse. In fact, the usage of slangs is mainly featured in both languages. In both analytical languages, bullying is characterized by the following linguistic features: offensive and derogatory words to harm a victim.

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