Multilingualism in Post-Soviet Space (in Kazakhstan and Georgia)

ABSTRACT

Under conditions of globalization, modern society all over the world undergoes certain changes in economic, cultural, political and religious fields which, in its turn, has a great influence on the language situation – one of the most important and urgent issues on the present stage of linguistics development. Globalization process creates general context of people’s development and the conditions for successful intercultural communication. As a result, certain changes have occured in language situation, which being in the midst of integration processes of the world varies from country to country. The main interest of the article is to consider the situation in the post-soviet space, namely in Kazakhstan and Georgia. Despite significant discrepancies in geo-political characteristics, the level of economic development, available natural resources, territorial and other parameters, language situation in these two republics has certain similarities.

Research objectives. The article makes an attempt to describe language situations in Kazakhstan and Georgia within the post-soviet period, find similarities and analyze the transition process from bilingualism to multilingualism.

Research methodology. In the research process we used a combination of general scientific, general and concrete methods, including different levels (description

VALENTINA CHKHEIDZE  
Akaki Tsereteli State University  
Kutaisi, Georgia  
valenta-val@mail.ru

NAZIYA ZHANPEISSOVA  
Baishev Aktobe University  
Kazakhstan, Aktobe  
nazija040658@yandex.ru

ZINAIDA CHACHANIDZE  
Akaki Tsereteli State University  
Kutaisi, Georgia  
chachanidzeziniko@gmail.com

method, statistical analysis, fragmentary description to distinguish fragments for contrasting single-system phenomena, etc.

Conclusion. In post-soviet space namely in Kazakhstan and Georgia under conditions of general integration knowledge of English is essential which leads to the transition from bilingualism to multilingualism. With an increasing significance of national languages and integration of the English language, the status of Russian changes. However, it remains the main functioning language both inside and outside these countries. Despite their differences, the language situations in these countries have certain common peculiarities which support formation of the new individual type capable of active life in multinational and poly-cultural environment.

Keywords: bilingualism, multilingualism, language situation, globalization, integration, triunity of languages.

Introduction

At the end of the previous century, the process of globalization, when the world turns into a united system, became an essential issue for thought and arguments, and the discussions about it are even fiercer today. In these conditions, the modern society in all countries, without exception, undergoes clear changes in economic, cultural, political and religious fields, which, in its turn, has a great influence on the condition of language situations which is one of the most important and urgent issues at the present stage of the development of linguistics. Under “language situation”, we mean the concept introduced by G.E. Tulegenova in her scientific work in which she gives quite an extensive review of the works on the definition of this term: “Language situation – is a combination of forms of existence (and styles) of one language or the combination of languages and their territorial and social interrelations and functional interaction within definite geographical regions or administrative and political formations” (Tulegenova, 2014).

The process of globalization at the present stage creates the general context for the development of people and, “being an objective tendency of development of mankind, it challenges the modern society – creating conditions for successful intercultural communication” (Glonti-Katanadze, 2013). Due to this, there are changes in language situation which in the midst of integration processes in the world is different in different countries. It is of interest to
look at the situation in post-soviet space, namely, in Kazakhstan and Georgia. Despite significant differences in geo-political characteristics, the level of economic development, natural resources, territorial and other parameters, language situation in these two republics have certain similarities.

**Research aims.** It is for the first time that the language situations in Kazakhstan and Georgia have been described in post-soviet period. These republics inherited bilingualism from the soviet past, though in the process of general globalization, bilingualism turns into multilingualism. That’s why our aim is to find some similarities in language situations, to analyze the conditions of transition from bilingualism to multilingualism.

**Research methodology.** In the research process, we used methods of different levels – empirical (observation, calculation, interview, comparison), experimental and theoretical (analysis, logical, historical), theoretical (study and generalization, analysis and synthesis), which helped to systematize gathered facts, make logical research, do certain generalizations.

**Language situation in Kazakhstan and Georgia in the period of globalization**

Until recently, bilingualism in Kazakhstan was considered to be the “inheritance of common soviet past”. At the moment of formation of the Republic of Kazakhstan, there were more than 120 nationalities living in the country and the most widely spread languages were Kazakh and Russian. Bilingualism had a large character throughout the country, and the concrete correlation between languages depended on “such factors as ethnic variety of the region population, neighbouring with other states, urban or rural area, etc” (Zhanpeisova, 2015).

Thus, describing Kazakhstan as a “multilingual, multiethnic, multicultural and polyconfessional country”, scientists emphasized that language situation in Kazakhstan was “centered around two demographically and communicatively powerful partners – Kazakh and Russian languages. These are languages spoken by millions. They belong to 4% of languages according to the number of speakers and lead according to the number of speakers in the country” (Zhanpeisova 2015).
According to the data from 2013, among the total population of 16 million and 967 people in the Republic of Kazakhstan, 11 million and 058 are Kazakhs (65.2%), Russians – 3 million and 698 people (21.8%), the rest population (13% representatives of other diasporas) are also mainly Russian speaking. The majority of Kazakh young population is also bilingual. According to Kazakh scientists, we could talk about a distinct tendency “to formation of parity of Kazakh-Russian and Russian-Kazakh languages among the youth: 69.7% of Russian respondents are bilingual with Kazakh as a second language and 72.6% of Kazakh respondents are bilingual with Russian as a second language” (Zhanpeisova, 2015).

“The Republic of Kazakhstan is a unique multinational country with mixed national population, with natural conditions for establishment and distribution of bilingualism as a social and historical event. In multinational professional collectives, in educational institutions with participants of mixed nationalities, in families with mixed nationalities, while establishing permanent contacts in international political, economic, scientific, cultural, sports life of different peoples, there are all conditions for the development of natural bilingualism” (Berger, 2015, p. 5). Some interesting data of sociological research are given in V.P. Berger’s dissertation: Throughout the Republic of Kazakhstan, at present stage of development, Kazakh-Russian bilingualism functions in all spheres of social and private life of Kazakh people from family to state, social and political life. However, depending on certain factors, the functioning spheres of Kazakh and Russian languages are different.

According to the data acquired from sociological research, the overwhelming majority of young respondents (natural bilinguals) pointed out that in the process of studies Kazakh and Russian languages are used more or less identically (42% always Kazakh and 45% frequently Russian). In shops, students often speak Kazakh (49%) and Russian (54%), similar results are found in the streets (in transport), Kazakh (44%) and Russian (53%).

If in the above given communication spaces there was little difference in the frequency of use of Kazakh and Russian, the situation is different while watching television programs and listening to the radio, reading scientific or fiction literature, working at the computer and using the Internet. The overwhelming
number of respondents point that in these spheres of communication they use Russian and sometimes Kazakh. According to Berger, this is caused by the following: the knowledge of the second language gave the possibility to use different sources of information in Russian; the prestige of the Russian language in Kazakhstan is quite high; the status of Russian is specified in legislation; the Russian language is the linguistic capital in modern Kazakhstan; the Russian language is the real language of international communication.

At home and with friends the majority of respondents always speak Kazakh (53% and 46%), 24% always speak Russian at home, and 36% always speak Russian with friends. According to Berger, the given data proves high communicative status of the Kazakh language, which is the result of consecutive linguistic policy in the country, at the same time it shows high ethno-lingual self-identification of the speakers of the Kazakh language.

Having studied the phenomenon of bilingualism on the example of the city of Aktope and the definition of the level of communicative competence of natural bilinguals – bilingual citizens of this city who acquired the skills of both languages from their childhood in natural conditions, Berger comes to the conclusion that communicative competences of natural bilinguals living in Aktope of Kazakh and Russian languages are generally comparable despite the fact that communication in either language is determined by spheres and environment of communication.

The process of research revealed respondents’ opinions about the necessity to learn Russian and Kazakh. The survey results showed the necessity to learn Russian and Kazakh (96% and 98%), which enables to look at the future Kazakh-Russian and Russian-Kazakh bilingualism with optimism.

About 70% of respondents chose Kazakh, Russian and English to bring up their children, which proves the maintenance of bilingualism, and the development of multilingualism in Kazakhstan. In Kazakh families, they mainly speak the Kazakh language, but Russian still preserves the most important social and communication functions. Thus, the functioning spheres of Kazakh and Russian languages are different.

Thus, the author states that on the territory of the Republic of Kazakhstan, namely, in Aktubin region, at the modern stage of development, Kazakh-
Russian bilingualism functions in all spheres of social and private life without exception, from family and everyday sphere to state, social and political life, therefore, there is a steady tendency to parity of functioning of Kazakh and Russian languages.

The young population of Aktobe is mainly bilingual; a considerable part of bilingual population is natural bilinguals, who acquired Kazakh and Russian languages in natural conditions from their childhood. Kazakh-Russian bilingualism is characterized by content peculiarity which helps to preserve and develop the Kazakh language and to balance the functioning of the Russian language.

The given data, according to Berger, proves that forming a bilingual personality the given condition will be the factor of mutual respect and strengthening the stability in the country (Berger, 2015, p. 87-88).

However, integration of Kazakhstan, together with other former soviet republics, in the global community partly changed the language situation in Kazakhstan as well as in the whole post-soviet space. The knowledge of international languages, namely, English is a necessary condition for successful career. It is not surprising that in both Kazakhstan and Georgia, there is a booming tendency to learn English: they have perfected the methodology of teaching of foreign languages, published modern textbooks and additional manuals, worked out special courses of Business English, prepared pedagogical staff with modern interactive methods of teaching foreign languages, modeled learning situations close to real language environment for activation of communication skills. But it is necessary to note that, though learning English all over the world is based on certain universals, within a particular country it is characterized by a number of peculiarities. We mean not the contrastive aspect of contacting languages (national and international), but also the language situation in the country in general, language and methodological traditions, the existing experience of learning other foreign languages, the level of motivation in the process of learning a new language, etc. Moreover, learning any foreign language means immersion into a different world, acquiring the ability to perceive the world in a different way, and this requires serious research in psychology, psycholinguistics, culturology, ethno linguistics, cognitive science,
as we have to get to know a different language image of the world as well as acquire some strange concepts, enrich cognitive basis. These processes are even harder if the language is acquired by a child at an early age, when the national lingual image of the world hasn’t been fully formed yet (Glonti-Katamadze, 2013), which is the topic of other research and we will not consider it within this article. Up to now, in multilingual Kazakhstan, there are numerous types of bi- and multilingualism, which differ in regions, spheres of functioning, peculiarity of influence of the first language on the second, etc. (Akhmtjanova, 2005, p. 299-308).

The Address from February 28, 2007, “New Kazakhstan in the new world”, allotted the task of realization of a special program “Triunity of languages”. The given task is mentioned in the 26th direction of the Address: Spiritual development of the peoples of Kazakhstan and triune language policy, which suggests step-by-step realization of the project “Triunity of languages”. “Throughout the world, Kazakhstan must be considered as a highly educated country the population of which speaks three languages. These are: Kazakh – national language, Russian – the language of international communication and English – the language of successful integration in global economy” (Triunity of languages, 2007).

The knowledge of Kazakh, Russian and a foreign language is becoming an inseparable part of private and professional activity in the modern society. All this causes a demand among a large number of citizens who are fluent in several languages and, therefore, get real chances of getting a more prestigious social as well as professional position (Kanafina, 2013).

Language policy in Kazakhstan has a rich philosophy. It implies that the citizens of Kazakhstan have to speak English and Russian but the Kazakh language must be the main identification feature. The requirement of the policy of triunity of languages in Kazakhstan is the knowledge of the Kazakh language by its citizens, “the knowledge of the national language is the responsibility and moral duty of every Kazakh”. “A significant emphasis is made on the Russian language, which is one of the world languages and is widely spread in the modern world. The third element is the English language, which is dominant in the modern world. English opens the door to the world, to globalization.
Kazakhstan is becoming wider and deeper involved in international processes and contacts. Nowadays, we don’t need to convince the society that the knowledge of English is the most important resource of their professional growth” (Triunity of languages, 2007).

The changes in language situation were not avoided in another post-soviet country – Georgia. Georgia is a small but multinational country, and it predetermines the peculiarities of its language policy. Alongside Georgian, this small country is the home of languages of other nationalities and ethnic groups, which makes up 30% of its population. It is a widely spread fact that at all times, Georgia has been tolerant to representatives of other nationalities and for centuries, “Christians (both Orthodox and Gregorian), Muslims and Jews felt comfortable here”. In multinational and tolerant Georgia, there have always been a large number of people who were fluent in two or even three languages. This was caused by historic and geopolitical factors – united international ideology in soviet times, refugees from Russia and Ukraine during collectivization and dispossession of kulaks whose grandchildren and great-grandchildren assimilated with local population but do not forget the language of their ancestors. Another factor of wide bilingualism in Georgia is the existence of sub-ethnic groups of Georgian people, such as Megrelians, Svans, Lazi, who, besides their own national languages, Megrelian, Svan and Lazi are fluent in Georgian. Representatives of different peoples living on the territory of Georgia (Russians, Ukrainians, Jews, Armenians, Greeks, etc.) can freely communicate in three languages – their native tongue, Georgian and Russian. Preserving the customs and traditions of their historic country, they follow local traditions which leads to strengthening cultures of different peoples.

The phenomenon of bilingualism made the interrelation and mutual influence between Russian and Georgian cultures a social thought in the field of philosophy, psychology, sociology, esthetics natural.

If, at the beginning of the 19th century, the Georgian language, which appeared in the 5th century, didn’t have official use as all state and educational documents were in Russian, after sovietization, Georgian acquired the status of official and, later, national language. Meanwhile, Russian, the language of international
communication was becoming the second native tongue. The middle of the 20th century was the apogee of spreading of Russian, republic party forums were held in Russian; it was prestigious to send Georgian children to Russian schools; in Russian schools in Soviet Georgia, subjects “Russian language” and “Russian literature” were registered in documents as “Native language” and “Native literature”; there were special resolutions about “the condition of teaching the Russian language in educational institutions of the republic and the ways of its improvement” (1973, 1979, etc.); there were attempts to make pupils of Georgian schools learn some subjects in Russian; in a number of high educational institutions one of the subjects was delivered in Russian. Sensible and progressive task was turning into a “weapon of dictators” (Grdzelidze, 1975). In 1978, in the project of creating a new edition of the Constitution of the Soviet Republic of Georgia, a paragraph on Georgian as a national language “was left out” which caused great opposition from people’s side. There was a wide protesting movement which ended in success – on April 14, 1978, Georgian was announced a national language.

At present, in the process of globalization which is focused on “Anglo-American model of society, its economy, politics and culture” the English language is spreading intensively as it claims to be “the first world language in the history of mankind” (Alpatov, 2005).

Nowadays, in the midst of intensive changes in social and political life of Georgia, language situation has dramatically changed: – Georgian-Russian bilingualism which was established within Russian empire and strengthened during the Soviet Union lost its social importance; – English as a foreign language was given a priority; – Georgian-Russian bilingualism of older generation was replaced by Georgian-English bilingualism of younger generation for whom English has become a compulsory subject in both secondary and high education, while Russian has acquired the status of the optional second language in schools and in universities even the choice is minimal; – moreover, if previously, within a united multinational state we were restricted by mass Russian-Georgian bilingualism and had minimal contacts with foreign countries, nowadays, our society is rapidly moving from bilingualism to multilingualism, which has become a vital condition for Georgia to be recognized by the world society.
Research of historic bilingualism showed that during all times, political, social, cultural changes led to the changes in language situation, which, in its turn, had a great influence on the formation of language image of the world of growing generation (Glonti-Katamadze, 2013).

The role of the Russian language, which occupied a privileged position in Georgia until recently and sometimes even competed with the national Georgian language, has gradually changed and, following global processes, it officially became one of the foreign languages. And, though the status of the Russian language has changed, it “still remains the main functioning language for a certain part of the population of Georgia, which is presented not only by Georgians, but also by the Russians, Jews, Ukrainians, Azerbaijanis, Greeks, Abkhazians, Ossetians, etc.” (Alania, 2012).

The Russian language is de facto the inter-language while communicating with neighboring regions (South Caucasus, North Caucasus). Nowadays, Russian officially serves national minorities within our country in their contacts with the representatives of Near and Far abroad, who speak Russian. A lot of Georgian and representatives of national minorities received education in Russian; some television and radio programs are broadcast in Russian, newspapers, journals and books are published in Russian. In secondary and high schools Russian is studied, in universities there is a major program “Russian Language and Literature”.

The Russian language in Georgia, like in nearly all former soviet republics, occupies a modest place, though it still continues functioning. People in Georgia understand that losing contacts with Russian means weakening links with the Russian culture, which played a huge role in the development of Georgian culture, and penetrated ideas and images of immense value. Two common centuries – it is the period of real mutual enrichment. It must be admitted that the knowledge of Russian today is a very important task. Communication with non-Georgian population has always been carried out through Russian. The perspective of multilingual development in Georgia must include the compulsory knowledge of Georgian, English and Russian languages, the knowledge of other foreign languages and the languages of national minorities living in Georgia (Alania, 2012).
Conclusions

Summarizing the above stated we can say that in post-soviet space, namely, in Kazakhstan and Georgia the existence of bilingualism was defined as “the heritage of common past”, the position of the Russian language was privileged; nowadays, a necessary condition in Kazakhstan and Georgia for successful career in the processes of general integration is the knowledge of English, which leads to the movement from bilingualism to multilingualism. Besides, one of the factors of the development of multilingualism at these territories is the multinational population of the given republics. With the strengthening of the role of state languages and rapid integration of the English language, the status of the Russian language changes, though it remains the main language of functioning both in and outside these countries.

Thus, despite the differences, language situations in Kazakhstan and Georgia in the process of world economic, political, cultural and religious integration and unification, possess certain similarities which support the formation of a new individual capable of active life in multinational and multicultural environment, who respects the cultures of other peoples, can live in peace and agreement with the people of different nationalities, races and religious beliefs.

References


Grبذلزديه R. *International communication in the developed socialistic society (on the example of the Soviet Republic of Georgia).* Tbilisi, 1975.


Aلانـ، D. *Russian Language in the Modern World.* Retrieved (17.05.2017) from: http://www.nplg.gov.ge/gsdl/cgi-bin/library.exe?e=d-01000-00---off-0periodika--00-1---0-10-0---0---0prompt-10---4--------0-11--11-ka-50---20-about---00-3-1-00-0-0-11-1-0utfZz-8-10&cl=CL4.1&d=HASH59c33761f6079d4e899cd6.1.5&gt=1

Received: 22.12.2017
Accepted: 12.02.2018