

LANGUAGES TODAY – COMPETITION OF REGIONAL, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGES (ON THE EXAMPLE OF GEORGIA)

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Abstract

Today globalization crosses the borders of the world countries. Drastic changes are seen in different spheres of life: technology, management, information, jurisprudence, culture – everything is globalized. The ongoing processes stipulate the spread of today’s “lingva franca” (the English language) and its interference into social lives of different segments of society. Growing popularity of the English language affects state languages and the necessity of application of special policies on their defense emerges. The given paper deals with the development of the Georgian reality under the influence of the process of internationalization and a growing competitiveness of regional, national and international languages.

Keywords: Globalization, higher education, lingva franca, state language.

Introduction

Globalization – a complex process of intercommunication, interdependence and internationalization – plays the greatest role in the formation of today’s world. It makes all the existed boundaries irrelevant and facilitates political, cultural, economic and environmental interconnections, which push people closer together through highly developed international trade, commerce, education exchange, rapid transportation and communication. The process of globalization gradually interferes into different spheres of life. It causes a rapid mutual penetration and fast intensification of the interdependence of national states in economical, ideological and cultural fields. In the wider sense, “globalization” refers to the transnational circulation of ideas and languages through acculturation.

When scholars overlook the results of the general globalizing processes, they usually indicate to the formation of a new competitive atmosphere. “Competitiveness” has become a major tool of economic development and prosperity. It has originated from the word “competition”, which indicates to a struggle of conflicting interests and denotes a rivalry of supremacy: “competition, in the sense in which the word is still used in many works, is merely a special case of the struggle for survival”¹. It “entered economics from common discourse, and for long it connoted only the independent rivalry of two or more persons”². However, “competition” is not merely an economic notion. It is presented in almost all spheres of human life: politics, culture, social life, jurisprudence, sports. The formation of new competitive landscapes is driven by the technological revolution, economic advance, political changes and significant globalizing processes. These environments have become

¹ Concepts of competition. Retrieved from <http://www.tu-chemnitz.de/wirtschaft/vwl2/downloads/wettbew/Concepts.pdf>

² Concepts of competition. Retrieved from <http://www.tu-chemnitz.de/wirtschaft/vwl2/downloads/wettbew/Concepts.pdf>

increasingly dynamic and have moved the parties towards rapidly changing strategies of maneuvering.

The given paper deals with the competition of languages, which occurs worldwide and “belongs to the general class of processes that can be modeled by the interaction of heterogeneous agents as an example of collective phenomena in problems of social consensus”³. Nowadays, “different languages coexist within many societies and the fate of a high number of them in the future is worrying: most of 6000 languages spoken today are in danger, with around 50% of them facing extinction in the current century. Even more striking is the distribution of speakers, since 4% of the languages are spoken by 96% of the world population, while 25% have fewer than 1000 speakers”⁴. When scholars speak about endangered languages, they usually underline a growing importance of the English language and its continuous worldwide spread. “English has run rampant across the globe... people want to speak English, because it is the language of advertising, blockbuster movies, and pop music, as well as a vital tool for success”⁵. “Except English, no other languages dominate international business, academia, media, the Internet, and international air/sea traffic”⁶. Moreover, persons of different nationalities learn a dominant language for functioning on a global scale. The increased spread of the English language indicates to its status of “lingua franca” and once again reminds us about ongoing globalizing processes.

However, the given paper does not describe globalized and endangered languages. It deals with the constantly changing environment of the Georgian reality via highlighting the growing competitiveness of regional, national and international languages.

Competition and Hegemony of Regional, National and International Languages in Today's Georgia:

The Georgian language (“Kartuli ena”) – the state language of Georgia - is one of the oldest languages of the world. It belongs to the family of the Caucasian languages (the group of the Kartvelian languages). It's believed, that the Georgian alphabet and script were created in the 4th century B.C. “Kartuli ena” has many dialects, which are divided into East Georgian and West Georgian groups. “These, together with the related Mingrelian (Megrelian), Laz (Chan), and Svan languages, make up the Kartvelian, or South Caucasian, language family. Georgian is spoken in parts of Azerbaijan and northeastern Turkey and in many villages in the region of Esfahān in Iran”⁷.

The given dialects and languages have been historically spread in different regions of Georgia. However, nowadays, under the influence of globalizing processes the situation gradually changes. On the one hand, an economic progress and a technological revolution facilitate the growth of the significance of a city-life, which stipulates the massive movement of the Georgian population from rural areas into the cities. On the other hand, the civil war of the end of the 20th century has resulted in the massive migration of refugees and their settlement in the urban areas. The given “shift of inhabitants” of different regions has caused the spread of regional languages and dialects at the expense of the national one. Nowadays,

³ San Miguel M., Eguiluz V., Toral R., & Klemm K., Binary and Multivariate Stochastic Models of Consensus Formation, Computer in Science Engineering, 2005.

⁴ Castello, X., Eguiluz, V. M., Miguel, M. S., Loureiro-Porto, L., Toivonen, R., Saramaki, J., and Kaski, K. Modelling Language Competition: Bilingualism and Complex Social Networks, Proceedings of the 7th International Conference on the Evolution of Language, World Scientific Publishing Company, 2008.

⁵ Turus-Dubrow R., World's Languages are Fast Disappearing, Independent, 2002. Retrieved from <http://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/162/27570.html>

⁶ Globalization and Languages, 2002. Retrieved from <http://www.globalhawaii.org/PDF/language.pdf>

⁷ Georgian language, Encyclopedia Britannica. Retrieved from <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/230307/Georgian-language>

the study of the life of Georgia's major cities indicates to the growing number of dialect-speakers. Therefore, the evident competitiveness of dialects emerges and the "struggle" of supremacy is visualized. The state tries to carry out a necessary strategy directed to the defense of "the purity of the Georgian language".

Another threat to the maintenance of the strength of the state language is an "invasion" of today's "lingva franca". An apparent reason of this process is an increasing internationalization of the Georgian society: teaching English acquires pressing urgency at schools, universities and other educational institutions; international co-operation and joint programs are facilitated and promoted in every field of social activities; mobility and exchange programs are welcomed at different institutions; the creation of joint companies and business organizations stipulates an active movement of capital and representatives of foreign parties; journalists try to keep pace with internationalization of press and media. All the above mentioned causes changes within a social landscape. The creation of social interactions demands the participation of the world's dominant language. As a result, "lingva franca" enters the space of the Georgian language. The Georgian scholars express their concerns in this respect:

"Numerous foreign words and forms have been established in the language. At a particular stage, the dominant language invades the morphology and destroys a lingual system... After several years the representatives of different generations may have difficulties in communication" (Prof. Kakha Gabunia)⁸.

Actually, the Georgian language is gradually changing. Major alterations are revealed on the lexical level. Numerous new words are built in the following way – the English stem adds the Georgian suffix or prefix. In certain cases, the English words are simply Georgianized – they are written via the Georgian letters. These processes are irreversible during the process of globalization. "Lingva franca" actually "invades" the lexical system and "gives birth" to irregular lingually unacceptable forms, which are spread in everyday life via mass media and press. The Georgian scholars express their concerns about this fact. According to Levan Berdzenishvili's point of view:

"Nowadays, a journalist establishes a norm and the ecology of the language is wrecked every day. The vocabulary and syntax are destroyed"⁹.

One more apparent threat of the strength of the Georgian language is the reduction of the number of Georgian-speakers. On the one hand, an increased internationalization causes the migration of Georgians and their assimilation with the world population. On the other hand, the massive movement of foreigners results in their settlement in different regions of Georgia and in the consequent popularization of the world's dominant language.

Regional vis-à-vis national and international vis-à-vis national – this is a brief description of the lingual landscape of today's Georgia. Georgia's government is focused on the application of special policies on the defense of the state language. One of them is the popularization of the Georgian language via increasing the number of Georgian-speaking population. Significant steps are taken in two major directions:

- newcomer foreigners are taught the state language;
- a special state policy enables the representatives of ethnic minorities to acquire a profound knowledge of the Georgian language and to enter state institutions of higher education.

The implementation of the given strategies is greatly facilitated by the first Georgian educational body – Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, which was founded on 26

⁸ Maghaldadze, E., A Destroyed Ecology of the Language, Liberali, 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.liberali.ge/ge/liberali/articles/114400/>

⁹ Maghaldadze, E., A Destroyed Ecology of the Language, Liberali, 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.liberali.ge/ge/liberali/articles/114400/>

January of 1918 owing to the leadership and huge effort of the famous Georgian historian Ivane Javakhishvili and the group of his followers. It was the first educational body of this type not only in Georgia, but in the whole Caucasus region. Since its establishment Tbilisi State University has been promoting high-quality education – the passage of „the social, cultural, spiritual and philosophical values of the community”¹⁰ to the future generations. Nowadays, it determines the nation’s conscience and facilitates the growth of intellectual and scholarly potential in Georgia. However, our epoch sets up new goals before the university. On the one hand, it shares the experience of advanced Western Universities. On the other hand, it maintains its best teaching and scientific traditions. Competitiveness has become the driving force of the university. However, competition is revealed not only on the level of Western – traditional, but it is fully represented in the attitude towards international (global) – local (state).

In 2009 Tbilisi State University accepted a state “preferential policy” (in 2009 appropriate amendments were made in the Law of Higher Education), which enables the young representatives of the ethnic minorities to integrate into the Georgian society via entering universities after the completion of one-year educational program. The given program is entitled “Teaching Georgian to the Non-Georgian Students” and considers those representatives of the ethnic minorities, which live in different regions of Georgia, but have a poor knowledge of the state language.

The teaching process comprises special preliminary (creation of teaching material – special readers; testing learners; creation of teaching groups: strong, middle and weak) and teaching (group-work; pair-work; oral presentations; keeping portfolios; discussion of modeled situations; role-playing; video and audio materials) activities. It:

- Develops students’ linguistic, socio-linguistic, discursive, socio-cultural, social and strategic competences;
- Establishes the respect of the Georgian lingual and cultural values;
- Promotes students enrollment in the University (occupation of the “targeted positions”);
- Popularizes the Georgian language and culture among non-Georgian citizens.

As a result, the number of the Georgian-speaking inhabitants increases. However, university promotes not only the development of the project “Teaching Georgian to the Non-Georgian Students”, but it also facilitates a successful implementation of the courses of the Georgian language for the newcomer foreigners. Special courses are organized by the Language Center and aim at the profound teaching of the state language via a well-thought educational program.

The “competitive atmosphere” is felt even in the University’s policy directed towards the intensive teaching of “lingva franca”. However, the given policy is restricted only to the Faculty of Humanities. The project „For the Improvement of Teaching Foreign Languages at the Faculty of Humanities of Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University” enables all the students of the Faculty to acquire a profound knowledge of “lingva franca”. Moreover, many graduates of the University participate in a progressive educational movement “Teach and Learn with Georgia”, which aims at a profound teaching of the English language in different regions (even, in very remote regions) of Georgia.

Therefore, all the above mentioned enables us to state, that similarly to all the countries of the world, Georgia undergoes the process of globalization resulted in the growing competitiveness of regional, national and international languages.

¹⁰ Devan K. Development of the Right to Education in India, *Indian Journal of Adult Education*, Vol. 72, No. 2, 2011.

On the one hand, globalization facilitates the growth of the significance of a city-life, which stipulates the massive movement of Georgian population from rural areas into the cities. The given “migration” causes the spread of regional languages and dialects at the expense of the national one. Hence, the state strategy directed to the defense of “the purity of the Georgian language” tries to maintain the strength of the national language.

On the other hand, the process of internationalization stipulates the spread of “lingua franca” and its temporary hegemony over other foreign languages. Growing competitiveness affects the state language and the necessity of application of special policies on its defense emerges. In the foreground of the ongoing processes “appear” higher education institutions (in our case, Tbilisi State University). They implement new strategies for balancing the “hierarchy” of languages and therefore, play the greatest role in the formation of the consciousness and values of future societies.

Many Georgian scholars express their concerns regarding the state language. A “destroyed ecology of the language”, “norms established by the journalists” and irregular, linguistically unacceptable forms increase concerns and destroy expectations.

“Nowadays, the enemies of the language are not the intruded forms of the foreign language. Our language cannot answer the challenges of the modern epoch. It must be possible to get, process and convey any information in the Georgian language in accordance with the form which is appropriate and relevant to our epoch”¹¹.

The given words of Nino Doborjginidze indicate to one of the keys opening the door towards the reduction of today’s competitiveness. On the one hand, purification of the state language, creation of new Georgian words nominating modern concepts (instead of the “direct Georgianization” of foreign terms) and availability of any kind of information in the state language will play the greatest role in the maintenance of the strength of the Georgian language and its everlasting existence. On the other hand, the popularization of the state language among newcomers and ethnic minorities will increase the number of Georgian-speakers. These measures will reduce competitive atmosphere, but will never “vanish” it.

Conclusion

And finally, we have to conclude, that according to the modern dimensions, the competition can be conceptualized as an integral part of globalization, which exists, flourishes and spreads throughout the globe via acquiring certain peculiarities of numerous crossed destinations. Its essence – the struggle for survival – has remained unchangeable throughout centuries. However, today’s competitiveness acquires the features of contemporaneity and goes in step with the inevitable changes of the world life.

The discussion of Georgia’s linguistic landscape gives a precise description of the role of competition in regard to lingual modernities. On the one hand, a ceaseless spread of regional languages and dialects contradicts the purity of the state language. On the other hand, an increasing internationalization causes the invasion of “lingua franca” into the landscape of “Kartuli ena”. Can we call increased dialectization and Englishization new “modernities”? Actually, we can, because these processes occurred at the end of the 20th century and are going on in the 21st century. Englishization is a logical attendant circumstance of globalization and an accompanying process of growing internationalization, while the roots of increasing dialectization are vividly seen in the civil war of the 20th century, which has resulted in the massive migration of refugees and their settlement in the urban areas. We believe, that the above given analysis presents a new outlook of competitive

¹¹ Maghaldadze, E., A Destroyed Ecology of the Language, Liberali, 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.liberali.ge/ge/liberali/articles/114400/>

lingual atmosphere. The new epoch always brings new challenges, which must be observed, assessed and publicized...

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