Viktoriia Iashkina

Oles Honchar Dnipropetrovsk National University

MULTILINGUALISM OR CULTURAL DIVERSITY?

ABSTRACT

The present work is aimed, first of all, at outlining the idea that integrative characteristic of any national culture, which is adopted in Western social psychology, obviously concentrates spiritual aspirations of the nation and vividly reflects the deep and stable type of individual and collective consciousness as well as behavior of its members. Values which lie at the core of cultural mentality, are a kind of "line of attraction" – they convert the empirical diversity of national cultures into a single systematic integrity.

Representing an organic synthesis of outlook and psychological orientation, mentality outlines cultural and semantic space of the society. It is formed by the interaction of various factors: natural, socio-cultural, psychological, etc., being developed under the influence of human environment, social conditions, and cultural traditions. National and cultural mentality, in its turn, generates and reproduces all key factors, being their source and cause, persisting in lifestyle, traditions, texts, values and semantic linguistic units, language as a whole.

The second message of the work is to state that, in connection with the mentioned above, an evident and extensive raise of multilingualism as both social and cultural phenomenon and a component of globalization appears to be the point of discussion because of its positive, though controversial influence.

Key words: *cultural mentality, cultural identity, multilingualism, bilingualism, globalization.*

Introduction

Cultural mentality (Lat. *mentalis* – mental, Lat. *cultura* – cultivation, education) is a concept introduced by Pitirim Sorokin to indicate the main component of any socio-cultural system, since it is the way of understanding the world which imposes a hierarchy of values and defines the criteria of truth [5].

P. Sorokin distinguishes two opposite types of cultural mentality:

1) Speculative mentality (ideological) presupposes that the world is eternal, its spiritual essence is not accessible to sensory perception, the most important are the spiritual needs, while physical pulses can be suppressed or limited; progress and self-development mean forming the ability to master the instincts and inclinations; values are eternal, unchanging and self-sustaining; the truth can be known only through mystical experience, intuition, faith, revelation and art. They should reflect the religious phenomena and serve contemplation; money and property are the only means to achieve higher goals;

2) Sensuous cultural mentality – the world is physical and accessible to understanding by a human mind, the most important are physical needs, and one must strive to their maximum achievement; progress is mastered through the environment, values are changeable and relative, truth is achieved in the experiments and observations on the logical foundations [5].

Between these two types of mentality, though, stands out a more transitional, so to say, a medium type of cultural mentality – idealistic. The history of mankind is represented as a series of cultural changes of mentality from speculative through idealistic to sensuous and back from sensuous through idealistic to speculative [5].

Thanks to such diversity now we are having the possibility to face (and research) the sensuous cultural mentality – the age of technical development, urbanization and globalization.

On the one hand, globalization clearly accelerates the process of "social and dynamic culture "(A. Moll). Globalization legitimizes the existence of certain cultural standards, according to which a human, living in the information society, should, first of all, speak several foreign languages, and subsequently know how to carry out the communication process with representatives of other cultural worlds etc.

In other words, globalization creates conditions for cultures to release beyond the communal, tribal and local territorial entities. As a result, new informational horizons, recent ideas, knowledge and skills accumulated by some ethnic group, are widely distributed in other cultural worlds, contributing to the formation, in consciousness of various nationalities, a more accurate idea of what constitutes other cultures or what place they occupy among national and ethnic cultures.

Globalization clearly increases density of the "information flow". Thanks to this, different cultures have a chance to break out of their ethnic or national limitation. Globalization has adopted, as its basic principle of coexistence of different cultural worlds, the principle of multiculturalism which is seen as an imperative state cultural policy, implemented in the information society and leading to positive global results.

On the other hand, there exists a strictly opposing point of view, the advocates of which state that globalization has dramatically exacerbated the problem of national and cultural identity (S. Benhabib, V.Koutyrev). They emphasize that multiculturalism as a basic principle of any culture does not imply positive interaction, and, especially, cultural dialogue of mentalities. In other words, globalization leads to fragmentation and localization [8].

In attempt to solve a dilemma, at least partly, we address to one of the basics of globalization principle. Multiculturalism, being in the focus of heated debates, possesses in its arsenal a wide range of concepts, among which multilingualism takes not the last place.

Theory

According to the general outcome of modern bulk of the research *multilingualizm* is proved to be both social and cultural phenomenon, which expands its influence on more than two thirds of the world population who are the speakers, in varying degrees, of two or more languages. This calculation also gives rise to the terms of *polylingvizm* or *multilinguizm*, because about one-quarter of the countries in the world recognize two official languages in their territory, a small number of countries, accordingly – three or more languages, though the actual number of co-existing languages in many countries is much larger [9].

The current relevance of *multilingualism* as social and cultural phenomenon lies in the fact that several languages simultaneous acquisition is a paramount prerequisite for successful existence and communities' well-being in the era of globalization, since globalization implies as its element interpenetration of material and spiritual components of different social cultures. Thus, mastering of forms and, above all, languages of foreign cultures is essential for the process of understanding others.

Taking into consideration the general outline of *multilingualism* as social and cultural phenomenon, we view **the aim** of this work as a process of determining the role and importance of *multilingualism* as a component of both globalization and cultural identity versus cultural diversity establishment.

It means exploration of the social context which plays its governing role in formation and development of multilingualism in contemporary society.

We also try to prove that reasons of *multilingualism* as social and cultural phenomenon is presupposed by the following **objective** factors:

• Intercultural integration in the era of globalization;

• Social prestige of languages;

• Genetic similarities of languages;

• Social mobility.

Returning back to definitions we cannot but mention that *multilingualism* (polylinguism, multilingvizm) means the use of multitude (more than two) of languages within a particular social community (especially one particular county or state); the use by individuals (or a group of people) a few languages, each of which is selected in accordance with a particular communicative situation [3].

Though, *multilingualism* is not only the ability to speak several languages, – it is also a special type of thinking which absorbs cultural values of several civilizations. It is a way of dwelling open to dialogue.

Method

While obtaining the results of the research we applied the following scientific methods, which helped to deepen the existing ideas and develop new ways of interpreting the already existing facts:

1) Linguistic method which is generally interpreted as a private scientific and research way to establish certain rules. Basically, this method is equal to comparative and historical one, which, having appeared as a result of relatedness of languages discovery, acquired a set of special procedures helping us to identify similar and different features of a divergent multilingual world;

2) Method of linguistic abstraction, which is used here to research, analyze and make descriptions of language phenomena in their cohesion, taking into consideration the links between people, world and language;

3) Method of induction and deduction which, by controversy between the nature of a studied object and an empiric material at hand, allows collecting and analyzing single language facts as the products of a language activity and helps in this work to research indirect language evidences in order to build a concise social and cultural picture;

4) Method of related sciences, borrowed from such sciences as psychology, sociology, anthropology, cultural sciences and history, which allows applying phenomena under consideration onto different fields of modern society existence [11].

Discussion and Results

A special case of *multilingualism* manifestation appears in *bilingualism*, which is an acquisition and use of two languages in oral and written communication. American sociology defines *bilingualism* as "the use of two languages with equal share of legitimacy in the workplace or in educational institutions" [1]. Though, up to present a more complete definition seems to have been given by Schweitzer and Nikolsky, who state that "bilingualism is the coexistence of two languages within a single language (speech) community where these languages are used equally in different communicative spheres depending on the social situation and other

parameters of the communicative act. Both languages, serving to one community, form a single socio-communicative system and coexist as functional complementary halves to each other" [4].

Two languages are usually formed in a human not equally, because there are no two exactly alike social spheres of language influence and cultural manifestation. That is why, in the definition of bilingualism there is no requirement of high level of proficiency in both languages. When one language does not interfere with another, but the second is developed to a high degree, close to the language proficiency in the mother tongue acquisition, scientists speak of balanced bilingualism. In this case the language of a higher level is called dominant, and this is not necessarily the first learned language.

Languages ratio may change in favor of any language under appropriate conditions, for example, one of the languages can partially degrade or adversely affect another language (*interference*), it may stop in development or be ousted from the use (*change of a language*), the language may be forgotten or become obsolete (*language death*). On the contrary, the language may revive and be supported (*preservation*), brought to the level of official recognition and use. These provisions are applied not only to individual speakers, but also to linguistic communities [12].

Returning to *multilingualism* one could not but mention the fact that it is an integral part, or even a phenomenon, of the XXI century. *Multilingualism* is inherent in all regions of the world in different forms and in different ways. Mastery of languages, which are a means of communication and information exchange within the people of other countries, is becoming increasingly important. *Lingua franca*, or the language of international communication, maintains an international function, bringing together, spiritually and morally, people of different nationalities [6].

Thus, multilingualism has always been and remains to this day a phenomenon necessary for coexistence of different ethnicities and cultures, which is a truly positive, but for some − a debatable feature, because it sometimes leads to opposite points of view: from inspired greetings to fierce resistance and prejudice.

The adverse party stresses that multilingualism is undermining the very possibility of a unique monolingual culture existence and in this sense is alarming for its preservation. The supporters prove the role of multilingualism as a leading phenomenon in expanding the cultural horizons of ethnos through communion with other cultures, because it "accumulates" the assimilated and potentially adopted human values.

Taking the opposing views into consideration, we could mention that in the

world of common contemporary values, among people seeking to find ways to achieve a "global humanism", which creates the possibility of establishing a humanistic society with different national models, it seems, at least, naïve to feel reluctance towards noticing the role of multilingualism in the formation of social heterogeneity and not to evaluate it as a positive factor in intercultural interaction.

Multilingualism as a social and cultural phenomenon confronts education challenges of preparing young people for life in a multinational and multicultural environment. It calls to form abilities to communicate and collaborate with people of different nationalities, races and religions.

The international community integration, as well as the development of planetary worldview, assumes taking into serious account national traditions in education, creating conditions for the formation of the cultural identity of ethnos, the formation of diverse and complex cultural environment for the development of personality.

Thus, the social nature of modern multilingual education has in its core the process of building not just a lingual, but also a general social competence as well as authenticity of contextual interpretation [14]. It solves the problem of ruining of ethnic status hierarchy, brings up critical awareness of the world with the development of communicative possibilities.

What is more, it creates a deeply reflective attitude of a nation towards its own culture and language. All mentioned above makes the process of socio-cultural broadcasting of ethnic values more stable, secure and manageable. It promotes conscious preservation of national culture by native speakers and develops socio-cultural experience of a particular society.

Conclusion

If we take into consideration the cultural aspect of globalization, it becomes obvious that extensive character of informational processes makes cultural exchange and dialogue of cultures inevitable. It forms, as a result, a common universal culture, which synthesize specific historical, social and cultural, religious and various other experiences of humans and states.

Grounding on mentioned above, it is obvious to say that respect for cultural heritage as well as an adequate perception of other cultures' elements through dialogue is the main way of human civilization development in the era of globalization.

It has not been determined yet how many languages a person can master – we only know that in the history of mankind have always been people who could not only use the mother tongue, but also have acquired many foreign languages. In the core of cultural diversity there is recognition of cultural complexity at both the individual level and at the level of

ethnic groups. The concept of globalization and multilingualism implies that the mother tongue may not be the one that matches the language of ethnicity and primary language use, but that which a person knows better and uses every day.

Thus, multilingualism as a social and cultural phenomenon is becoming a worldwide everyday reality. In particular, it has been revealed that:

· Multilingualism is a true linguo-social fact existing for the vast majority of the world population due to the increasing interaction of economic, scientific, cultural and political interests;

Multilingualism is a means of socialization; it helps forming the guidelines of empathy and tolerance through the social and communicative process, which is specifically organized and promoted within a bilingual approach to education;

In its social essence the phenomenon of multilingualism leads not to loss, but to the expansion of cultural identity. It increases reflexive and valuable attitude to the achievements of native culture through the growth of cultural wealth and opportunities of a person to be engaged in intercultural dialogue;

Multi-lingual social identity in a multicultural context is a necessary condition for achieving an adequate level of social competence, which helps to maintain cultural identity and strengthen the capacity of social mobility within the existing cultural environment. Multilingual adaptation to a new social and cultural environment allows to overcome culture shock and marginalized socio-cultural status.

References

1. Верещагин Е.М. Психологическая и методическая характеристика двуязычия (билингвизма) [Текст] / Е.М. Верещагин. – М. : Изд-во МГУ, 2010. – 160 с.

2. Головаха Є., Горбачик А., Тенденції соціальних змін в Україні та Європі: за результатами «Європейського соціального дослідження» (2005–2009) [Текст]/ Є. Головаха, А.Горбачік. – К. : Інститут соціології НАН України, 2010. – С. 114–115.

3. Зограф Г. А. Многоязычие [Текст] / Г.А. Головаха // Лингвистический Энциклопедический словарь. – М.: Советская энциклопедия, 1990. – 303 с.

4. Кутырев В.А. Культура и технология: борьба миров [Текст] / В.А. Кутырев. – М., 2001. – 263 с.

5. Сорокин П.А. Человек. Цивилизация. Общество [Текст] П.А. Сорокин. – М., 1992. – С.213-217.

6. Тер-Минасова С. Г. Язык и межкультурная коммуникация [Текст] / С.Г. Тер-Минасова. – М.: Слово, 2000. – 624 с.

7. Швейцер А. Д., Никольский Л.Б. Введение в социолингвистику [Текст] / А.Д. Швейцер, Л.Б. Никольский. – М.: Высшая школа, 2008. – 215 с.

Web references

8. Benhabib, Seyla, The Claims of Culture: Equality and Diversity in the Global Era / S. Benhabib // [Electronic resource] : Access : http://press.princeton.edu [14.09.13]

9. Haskelberg, Maria, Bilingualism / M. Haskelberg // [Electronic resource] : Access : http://www.log-center.ru/hints/dvuyazichie/bilingvizm [21.08.13].

10. Kulsarieva A.T., Multilingualism as a condition for dialogue between cultures / A.T. Kulsarieva // [Electronic resource] : Access : http://kazakheli.kz/publications/ [09.08.13]

11. Методы лингвистического исследования и описания языка, обусловленные функционально-стилистическим инвариантом [Електронний ресурс] - Режим доступу:http://gerebilo.ucoz.ru [09.08.13]

12. Online Encyclopedia Krugosvet. Bilingualism // [Electronic resource] : Access : http://www.krugosvet.ru [17.07.13]

13. Радаева Ксения, Секреты полиглотов / К. Радаева // [Электронный ресурс] : Режим доступа: http://www.sido.ru/library/publications

14. Shirin A.G. Pedagogical aspects of bilingualism: the development of new scientific school / A.G. Shirin / [Electronic resource] : Access : http://edu.novgorod.ru. [09.08.13]