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On Some Characteristics of Multilingualism through the Prism of the Education System

The article considers the origin of the term «multilingualism», which has such synonyms as «plurilingualism», «polylinguism» and denotes using several languages within a particular group (a state) or using several languages by a person (a group of people). The authors present various forms and varieties of multilingualism. The necessity of taking into account and fulfilling certain conditions for the development of multilingual education is justified. The authors concluded that multilingualism is a single language system, and the principle of relying on the native language is important when learning a foreign language. Multilingual education helps to develop a tolerant attitude to the culture of another nation, and interaction, mutual understanding, as well as mutual enrichment of spiritual wealth take place while mastering a foreign language. As a result, it was identified that today linguistic and cultural diversity is considered as one of the values of the World Heritage.

Keywords: multilingualism, multilingual education, plurilingualism, polylinguism, bilingualism, trilingualism, foreign language, English, characteristics.

Introduction

The problems of bilingual, multilingual, and multicultural education are considered in the works of a number of foreign scientists from different aspects. The conceptual foundations of multilingual education are logically developed in the works of D. Coyle [1]. Our study of the problems in the field of multilingual education is also grounded on scientific works of foreign researchers who define the foundations of bilingualism, multilingualism and trans-linguistics in the 21st century, strategies of bilingual education, revealing the concepts of language and cultural awareness [2–5].

The term «multilingualism» (synonyms: plurilingualism, polylinguism) refers to using several languages within a particular group (a state); using several languages by a person (a group of people), the role of each of which corresponds to a specific communicative task. A monolingual society may have multilingual members, and vice versa, a multilingual state may also consist of monolingual members of the society (for example, in Switzerland). According to the history, multilingualism has always existed for cross-cultural relations. The term «multilingualism» first appeared in European languages only in the XIX century. So, in the dictionary of N. Webster, the appearance of the word «multilingualism» dates back to the forties of the XIX century [6]. The meaning of the concept of «multilingualism» (also bilingualism, trilingualism) acquired a new connotation over time, with respect to the territorial conditionality and the language situation. However, the original meaning of multilingualism as «proficiency in several languages to the same extent as monolinguals are proficient in their native language» extended to bilingualism / trilingualism as varieties of multilingualism, meaning «equally high proficiency in two or three languages».

Multilingualism has different forms and varieties. According to L.V. Shcherba, bilingualism (a kind of multilingualism) is divided into two types:

- pure bilingualism functions when languages are isolated from each other. For example, people speak one language at home, and another language at work and in society (the situation in Kazakhstan, mainly in the 90th years of the XX century: people spoke Kazakh at home and Russian at work);
- mixed bilingualism, when a person uses both languages equally freely, unconsciously switching from one language to another, and the process of mutual understanding is carried out effectively (the situation of modern Kazakhstan) [7].

«The Basic Strategy of Multilingualism» defines «multilingualism» as «both the ability of an individual to speak and use several languages, and the simultaneous existence of many languages on the planet» [8].

I. Bertrand defines multilingualism as «the ability of a person to possess at least limited knowledge of two or more foreign languages in the same or different spheres of communication based on knowledge of the native language» [9].

Interpreting the opinion of I. Bertrand, it can be stated that multilingualism does not require proficient mastery of foreign languages, only «limited knowledge of two or more foreign languages» is sufficient for the professional sphere.

The end of the 20th century celebrated the changes in approaches to the goals of multilingual education. For example, international organizations such as the Council of Europe and the European Union, which promote the development of linguistic diversity in Europe and spread of multilingual education, have not only common goals but common attributes (anthem and flag) as well, and differ in their approaches to the idea of European multilingualism.

Experimental

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages proposed by the Council of Europe in 1997 and the European Language Portfolio served as an important tool for multilingual education. It reflects the attitude of the Council of Europe to multilingualism, which is represented by a kind of emphasis on individual multilingualism. The system of Pan-European Competences of the Council of Europe was supported by the European Union and UNESCO and was published simultaneously in English and French in 2001 [10].

The European Union's approach to multilingualism is expressed considering multilingualism as a process of mastering at least two EU languages in addition to the native language, i.e., the goal of building a multilingual society is individual multilingualism based on the knowledge of at least two foreign languages, which should become the norm regulated by the official documents on language education [10,11].

In general, if we consider the concept of multilingualism and the language policy of the European Union, it is obvious that it is aimed at establishing understanding (between people, societies, states) through intercultural communication, which is viewed as the main activity of modern man and which is impossible without knowledge of foreign languages. What is particularly important in the language policy of the European Union, which also correlates with the language policy of modern Kazakhstan, is that it is impossible to achieve mutual understanding and harmony and develop multilingualism if a person does not know their native language, their culture, and their national identity.

The development of multilingualism takes place when the following conditions are taken into account and met:

- the early development of a foreign language begins along with the native language;
- at least two foreign languages are taught in schools;
- foreign languages are taught in universities, academic mobility of students is realized;
- it becomes available to learn foreign languages for adults, for people with special needs through online learning;
- the state support for minority languages is provided;
- professional development of foreign language teachers is carried out through training, retraining and implementation of their mobility;
- the system of assessment of students' language competencies on the basis of the language portfolio is being improved.

In our research, we consider multilingualism not only as a social phenomenon, our research is focused on the issues of foreign language teaching, language and foreign language education, and didactics of foreign languages.

The ambiguity of the concept of «multilingualism» has led the scientific community and society as a whole to a great debate: whether multilingualism is a branch of the general didactics of foreign languages. This question was answered by G. Neuner, who believes that the concept of multilingualism is not a new method of foreign language teaching, but only serves as a new approach that expands and profiles the existing system of communicative learning [12].

He identifies two levels of the concept of multilingualism:

- understanding between people at the level of perception and processing of information (Verständigung). The English language fulfills this function in modern society, notably its «common version», the so-called Basic English;

– mutual understanding and acceptance (Verständnis) of the social culture of the communicative partner, manifestation of tolerance, respect, and interest in each other, which is the task of intercultural didactics (Interkulturelles Didaktik).

Thus, in the methodological projection, the concept of multilingualism offers methods and techniques that help to optimize the educational process and achieve the successful development of students' multilingual (language awareness) and multicultural (culture awareness) consciousness.

F. Meisner presents his vision of the process of mastering foreign languages as follows: the acquisition of the first foreign language occurs inductively, while the second and third languages' acquisition the existing language systems are compared with the new one. At the same time, the new foreign language and its structure are compared with the existing knowledge and find their place in the system of languages. Based on this statement, the teacher's task is a constant comparison and analysis, considering the student's personal «language biography»: his native language and previously acquired foreign languages. Meisner argues that learning foreign languages in isolation, without taking into account the existing knowledge (Vorkenntnisse) is inefficient, so the language is thus quickly forgotten [13].

Therefore, the consideration of multilingualism through the prism of the educational system is characterized as follows:

– multilingualism is a single language system, not coexisting of separate languages and language systems;

– multilingualism implies the possession of a single communicative competence, regardless of the level at which a person speaks a particular language;

– in the conditions of multilingualism, the foreign language which is being studied is mastered based on the native and foreign languages, when there is a constant comparison of two(three) language systems, regular reference to the knowledge of the native language, to the comparison, analysis, allocation of common and different in the native and studied foreign languages. So, languages interact in the process of mastering, mutually enriching and complementing each other;

– the study of any foreign language is accompanied by the study of the culture of the people, of the native speaker. In this regard, it should be noted that the multilingualism of a person who is aware of his belonging to a particular ethnic group and state as a whole, is accompanied by self-identification in the world space, the development of socio-cultural competence;

– in the process of mastering foreign languages, a linguistic personality establishes correspondences and differences between two linguistic pictures of the world as a result of comparing the images of consciousness of their own and other cultures, acquiring the character of a dialogue of cultures as «communication of images of different cultures within the same consciousness» [14];

– language and cultural diversity is considered today as one of the values of the World Heritage, as a philosophy of intercultural harmony in a multicultural and multilingual community, as a means of mutual understanding and enrichment.

Multilingual education forms the consciousness of the personality, its ability to be socially mobile in society, to freely integrate into the open information space; acts as a tool for active human activity in a multilingual society; is aimed at learning about someone else's culture and understanding their own ethno-cultural origins, readiness for open dialogue and tolerant attitude to other languages and cultures.

Thereafter, considering concepts of «multilingual education», «polylingual education», «trilingual education» in the framework of our study has allowed us to conclude that the concepts of «multilingual education», «polylingual education», «trilingual education» in general can be used synonymously, since these concepts express the process of mastering two or more languages. The concept of «trilingual education», which characterizes the Kazakhstani language policy and language situation, we also put the concepts of «multilingual education» and «polylingual education» in one synonymous row.

Results and Discussion

The NIS implements programs of early immersion into the Kazakh language (L1): those who do not speak the Kazakh language begin to learn the language from the 1st grade. In the 2nd grade, the Russian language is introduced (L2). From the 3rd grade, the English language training begins (L3) and, pupils are prepared for English-language training in the next four years (Figure 1).

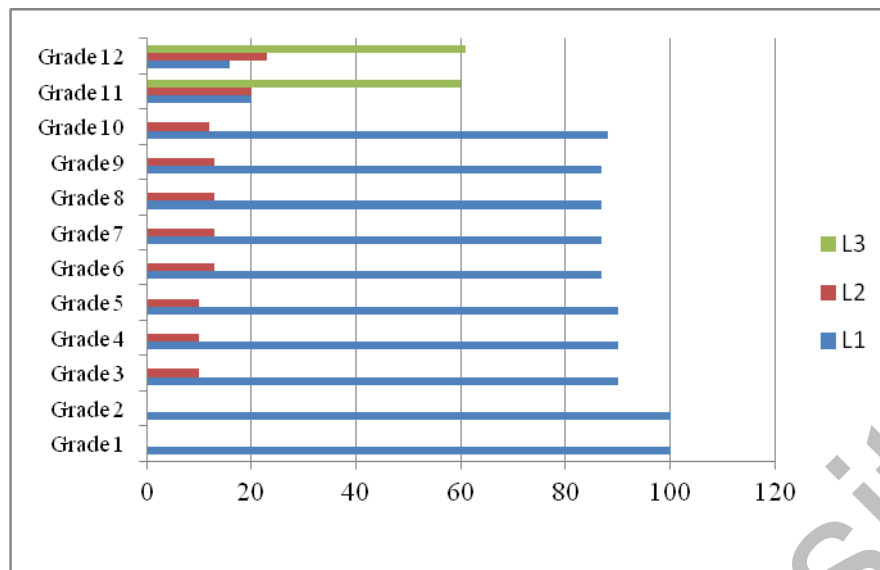


Figure 1. Model of Teaching in Three Languages in NIS

Multilingual education implemented in NIS is characterized by the study of three languages (L1, L2, L3) as language subjects and using three languages as media of instruction. In addition, the development of students' language competence is carried out through the organization of extracurricular activities in three languages (See Table 1).

Table 1

Number of Lessons Per Week in the Context of Languages in NIS (L1, L2, L3)

Grades	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
L1 — Kazakh / Russian	6	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	1,5	1,5
L2 — Russian / Kazakh	5	4	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	3	1,5	1,5
L3 — English	3	4	5	5	5	5	4,5	4,5	5	5	6	6

Regarding the native language (L1), its study is carried out throughout the entire period of study at school, up to the 12th grade. Furthermore, the knowledge of the native language (L1) is improved by studying a number of subjects in L1, for example, mathematics. Early immersion in the Kazakh language allows us to reduce the share of Kazakh as the language of instruction at the senior level of education.

As for the English language (L3), at the initial stage (3rd grade), it is studied as a subject with the preparation of students for learning disciplines in English, which is carried out from the 11th grade. The presence of teachers who are native English speakers or teachers with a C1, C2 level of language proficiency allows the NIS graduates to reach the C1 level.

«Bilim-Innovation» Lyceum offers training in four languages: Kazakh, Russian, English and Turkish. The subjects of the natural-mathematical cycle are taught in English. Turkish is studied as a second foreign language due to the variable part of the curriculum. From the 9th grade, a late immersion program in the Kazakh language is implemented, where groups with Russian as the language of instruction study 46 % of the curriculum in the Kazakh language. Russian is studied as a language subject. Training in English is introduced into BIL after 4 months of intensive language training (See Figure 2).

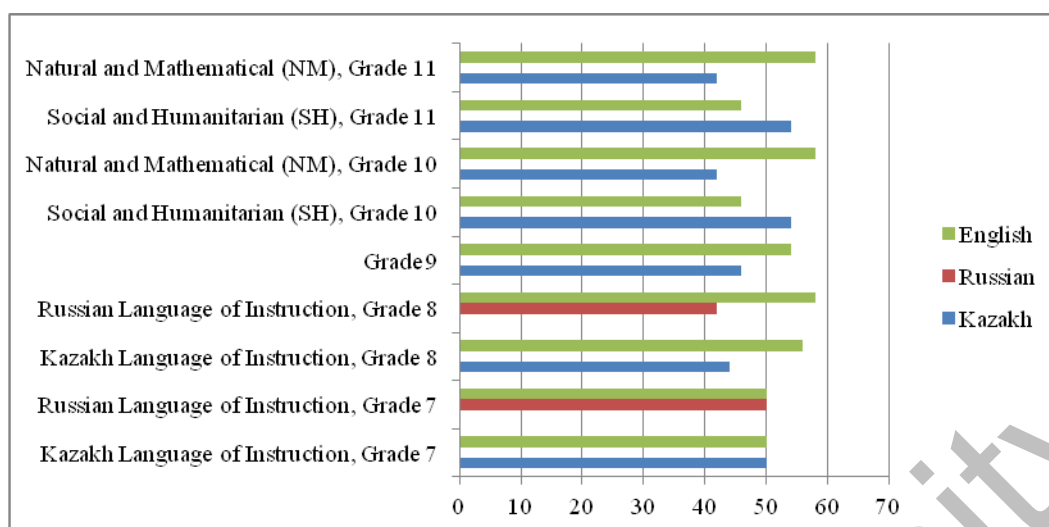


Figure 2. The Model of Multilingual Education in «Bilim-Innovation» Lyceum

The implementation of multilingual education in BIL is characterized by the study of 4 languages as language subjects, teaching is carried out in two languages (the exception is L1 in groups with RLI from the 9th grade): in Kazakh and in English (study of subjects in English from the 7th grade, study of mathematics in L3). The peculiarity of BIL is that even without native English teachers, intensive language training is (often) carried out (for 4 months in the 7th grade), which allows children to study subjects in English. BIL is also distinguished by active organization of extracurricular activities in four languages, which contributes to the improvement of the level of linguistic competence of students with the achievement of the level of English proficiency at the end of school — B2 (See Table 2).

Table 2

Number of Lessons Per Week in the Context of Languages in BIL

Grades	7	8	9	10 (SH)	10 (NM)	11 (SH)	11 (NM)
Languages							
Kazakh	5/5*	5/5*	5/6*	6/6*	3/5*	7/6*	3/5*
Russian	3/5*	3/5*	3	4	2	3	2
English	5/4*	5/4*	4	4	2	4	2
Turkish	3/3*	2/2*	1	0	0	0	0

The allocation of academic load in language subjects in NIS and BIL is twice as large as in general education schools. In NIS and BIL, the weekly load on L2, L3 is 4–5 lessons, while in general education schools it is 2–3 lessons. The expected level of proficiency in L2 in NIS is C1, and in BIL is B2-C1, while in general education schools it is B2. The expected level of proficiency in L3 in NIS is C1, and in BIL is B2, while in general education schools it is B1.

Conclusions

The analysis of multilingual education in Kazakhstan on the example of innovative educational institutions (NIS, BIL) has shown that it is successfully implemented, aimed at the formation of language pluralism, language tolerance within the multi-ethnic space (the «inside» orientation), integration into the world community [15], as well as the formation of a multilingual personality — a citizen of Kazakhstan who speaks at least three languages, knows how to conduct a dialogue in various fields of activity, appreciates the culture of his people, understands and respects the culture of other peoples [16].

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Білім беру жүйесінің призмасы арқылы көптілділіктің кейбір сипаттамалары туралы

Мақалада мультилингвизм, көптілділік сияқты синонимдері бар «көптілділік» терминінің пайда болуы қарастырылған және ол белгілі бір топ (мемлекет) ішінде бірнеше тілдің қолданылуын немесе адамның (адамдар тобының) бірнеше тілді қолдануын білдіреді. Авторлар көптілділіктің әртүрлі формалары мен түрлерін ұсынған. Көптілді білім беруді дамытудың кейбір шарттарын ескеру және орындау қажеттілігі негізделген. Зерттеу нәтижесінде көптілділік біртұтастылды жүйе деп тұжырымдайды, яғни, шетел тілін үйрену кезінде ана тіліне сүйену принципі маңызды. Көптілді білім беру кезінде басқа халықтың мәдениетіне толерантты көзқарас тәрбиеленеді, шетел тілін меңгеру процесінде өзара іс-қимыл, өзара түсіністік, рухани байлықтың өзара байытылуы жүреді. Осылайша, тілдік және мәдени әртүрлілік бүгінде дүниежүзілік құндылықтардың бірі ретінде қарастырылатындығы туралы қорытынды жасалған.

Кілт сөздер: көптілділік, көптілді білім беру, мультилингвизм, көптілділік, үштілділік, шетел тілі, ағылшын тілі, сипаттама.

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О некоторых характеристиках многоязычия сквозь призму системы образования

В статье рассмотрено происхождение термина «многоязычие», имеющее синонимы *мультилингвизм*, *полилингвизм* и обозначающее использование нескольких языков в пределах конкретной группы (государства) или употребление человеком (группой людей) нескольких языков. Авторами приведены различные формы и разновидности многоязычия. Обоснована необходимость учета и выполнения некоторых условий развития многоязычного образования. В результате исследования сделан вывод о том, что многоязычие представляет собой единую языковую систему, и при изучении иностранного языка важен принцип опоры на родной язык. При многоязычном образовании воспитывается толерантное отношение к культуре другого народа, в процессе освоения иностранного языка происходит взаимодействие, взаимопонимание, взаимообогащение духовного богатства. Таким образом, языковое

и культурное многообразие должно рассматриваться сегодня как одна из ценностей всемирного наследия.

Ключевые слова: многоязычие, многоязычное образование, мультилингвизм, полилингвизм, двуязычие, трёхязычие, иностранный язык, английский язык, характеристика.

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