Trilingual education development in universities of Kazakhstan

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Abstract

This paper is devoted to the discussion of the development of trilingual education in Kazakhstan and the impact of this language policy on educational process. The state project Trinity of Languages gives a brilliant chance for young generation of Kazakhstan to be competitive in this challenging community. This paper shows the importance not only of Kazakh and Russian, but also a vital necessity of learning and teaching English in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Focus group discussions with students are analyzed to measure the participants desire to use three languages. The results of questionnaire provides considerable empirical evidence to support the authors arguments on the necessity of introduction of a trilingual education in higher educational system. Nowadays, teaching of three languages is being introduced in Kazakhstan. The study is based on consideration of trilingual educational model from expressive, unifying and integrative functions of languages.

Keywords: Learning, English, Kazakh, Russian, Trilingual Education, University

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INTRODUCTION

Kazakhstan is formally a trilingual state with Kazakh, Russian, and English. The status of these languages was proclaimed in October 2006 at the 12th session of the Assembly of Nations of Kazakhstan, where the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan N. Nazarbayev put forward that the knowledge of three languages was very important for the future of the next generation. Most universities in Kazakhstan are appropriately placed within a bilingual category with Kazakh and Russian as general operating languages. Accordingly, the national project Trinity of Languages defines knowledge acquisition of Kazakh as the state language to be very significant point. Russian is used as the language of interethnic communication, since more than 130 nationalities live in Kazakhstan. English is the language of successful integration into the global economy.

According to data offered by the State Educational Authority, the number of students in multilingual groups have been increased at universities of Kazakhstan by 360,000 or 1.4% and by 8.3% for teachers, speaking English in these groups. New disciplines such as Professionally Oriented Kazakh (Russian) Language and Professionally Oriented Foreign Language were introduced into the educational curricula of universities. Additionally, universities are implementing tiered models of learning English in accordance with international standards. Universities have implemented plans to pass institutional and specialized accreditation in three languages. Most of the basic educational books at universities are now translated into Kazakh, Russian and English.

In the context of the dynamic changes taking place in Kazakhstan, it is crucial to comprehend and study in-depth the issues related to the development of trilingual education, which requires the Motherland language to be learnt and promotes studying the L2 and L3 respectively. It should be noted that current language policy is aimed at harmonious relations between two communicative and demographically powerful Kazakh and Russian languages in all spheres, particular in education. Since Kazakhstan has got its independence, Nursultan Nazarbayev constantly has been asserting a trilingual education model. In his opinion, each person in Kazakhstan should strive to be fluent in English, Russian, and Kazakh. Principles of the national project Trinity of Languages determine...
Kazakh as the state language, Russian as the official language, and English as the language of international communication (Boonyarattanasoontorn, 2017; Nazarbaev, 2007).

Kazakh and Russian languages are learnt in educational establishments at all levels. Kazakh is the native language of training at schools, colleges and higher institutions. Moreover, Kazakh language is taught as an official language in every academic institution, despite of the teaching language. Russian language is taught as native in educational institutions with Russian language teaching, and as a compulsory school subject in all educational institutions. A growing interest for learning three languages in Kazakhstan drives to new experimental programs for the last decade. Since 2011 till 2020 the Nation Project of Language Education Advancement in Kazakhstan has been carried out as an organizational fundamental element for trilingual education implementation. The number of Established Educational Instruments have been signed on the governmental level for the last 12 years. The State Development Program on Education and Science for 2016-2019 comprises the main directions of the development of trilingual education and the adopted Road Map of trilingual education for 2015-2020. The new State Compulsory Standard of Education at the level of higher education within the framework of the Road Map provides measures on amendments and additions to the curriculum and standards of higher education. It includes 20% of subjects taught in Kazakh and Russian (in Kazakh groups Russian, in Russian groups - Kazakh) and 30% in English.

There are different bilingual programs in such countries as USA, Canada, Germany, France, England and Wales, but a trilingual education system exists in Luxembourg. Approximately 100% of people learn three languages as Letzeburgesch, German, French and they are considered as trilingual citizens of the country. Therefore, three-language policy is successfully implemented in school system of education.

Current European community promotes learning of several languages as in school and in higher education system. It is set up on the acknowledgment of English as a lingua franca and as a language of international scientific and technical communication for people to share their opinions on different topics. However, this recognition is also extended to the existence of other languages, the need to learn them.

There are already many instances of successful experimentation in this direction in higher education. Europeans hope that the culture of the young generations of Europe will thrive on the fruitful abundance of languages (Williams, 1993).

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

The researchers Krashen and McField (2005) asserted that the American public was under the impression that bilingual education did not work. Yet even a quick glance at the professional literature shows that it does. The research has reported that students in bilingual programs typically outpace their peers in all-English programs on tests of academic achievement in English. Or, at worst, they do just as well. Numerous reviews of the research have confirmed this conclusion. Several reviews of this kind have concluded that bilingual and multilingual education is more effective than all-English programs in helping students to acquire English and to progress academically.

At the same time a bilingual educator in Texas and a member of the Texas Association for Bilingual Education Tinajero (2005) considered the nation was leading the way toward a biliterate and multilingual America, as enrichment bilingual programs, both one-way and two-way, flourished throughout Texas. Americans should be grateful for the support that bilingual education has enjoyed in the state, unlike many others. While similar programs in other states are often challenged and even dismantledas in California, Arizona, and Massachusettsin much of Texas, students bilingualism is used as a resource in the learning process. While rancorous political debates are raging elsewhere, with confusing claims and counterclaims about the value of bilingual education, Texas is poised to be the model, a paradigm of what is possible when childrens cultural and linguistic diversity are treated as the assets they are. It is the potential in Texasto be a leader for the nation. For that to happen, however, the programs for English language learners need two things: a guarantee of adequate funding and a fair and rational system of accountability.

The discussed research is focused on using three languages in educational process: Kazakh, Russian, and English. Mathiot (1975) generally assume that a language fulfills expressive, unifying, and integrative functions. In expressive function, a language expresses the intimate experiences and world views of its native speakers. This is essentially an in-group function (Nida & Wonderly, 1971), limited to the native speakers circle of personal
contacts. Even in a formal setting, native speakers generally use their language for expressive function. Kazakh language has been applying expressiveness in every domain of current life. In unifying function, a language supports the feeling of togetherness, the sense of kinship and unity of community. It may be an in-group or out-group functions involving both native and non-native speakers as the Russian language. Nida and Wonderly (1971) clearly distinguish in-group and out-group communication. In-group language, a language that is applied in any community for the basic face-to-face relationship with other speakers whom the individual in question fully identifies. Out-group language, people use it for contacting people of groups outside their own community. Russian supports a sense of uniqueness among nations. In integrative function, a language can serve to integrate non-native speakers within its related community. English performs an integrative function in Kazakhstan. The non-natives (Kazakhs, Russians) learn English to participate in the cultural, economic, or political events.

**Kazakh and Russian**

Usage of the Kazakh language in higher schools is mainly shown in groups where medium of instruction is Kazakh and who mostly reads Kazakh language journals, books and scientific literature. In spite of medium of instruction, most of Kazakh students use Russian in the public domain. Kazakh and Russian are used as the media of instruction in all educational institutions of Kazakhstan.

**English**

Compared with the use of Kazakh and Russian, English is also taught in our universities. Universities organize many English-speaking meetings, conferences, forums, seminars, in spite of the fact that there are slightly few native English speakers in Kazakhstan.

The language policy of Kazakhstan determines the necessity of a functional trilingual education model involving Kazakh (State), Russian (Official), and English (International), including the development of these language skills as reading, writing, listening, speaking.

**RESEARCH MODEL**

This research presents trilingual educational model, which encompasses expressive, unifying and integrative functions of languages. These functions allow developing all language skills (Figure 1).
Based on the trilingual education model, each citizen of Kazakhstan is able to improve language skills not only in Kazakh and Russian, but also in English. This mentioned model assists to perform all language functions. By using the language for different purposes, it is important to mention language functions. Language function helps to see the point of view, to give advice or to come to an agreement. The functional use of language is not only based on certain language structure or grammatical rules, but it is aimed at understanding the context and the usage of the language (Cook, 1985).

Expressive function is one of basic functions in linguistics. A thought has to be expressed verbally before it can be verbally communicated. Therefore, expression is a prerequisite for communication. Expression is the individual act that comes before the social act of communication. While the relationship between individuals in society is the dimension of communication, the relationship between a language and thoughts in the individual’s linguistic act (or "speech act") is the dimension of expression (Wilkinson & Walsh, 2015).

The Kazakh language plays an expressive function in this research. A great number of people are studying and living in a Kazakh environment. Owing to it, people can express their ideas and thoughts, argue and prove their points of view, develop the usage of the Kazakh language in writing, and communicate with other Kazakh people. In recent years, the Kazakh language has gradually been introduced as the language of choice, especially in areas with the dominant Kazakh population, as it is in the south and in the west of the country https://goo.gl/1ds9PG. According to the census of Kazakhstan population 2016, the number of Kazakh people is 63.1%; and Russians-23.7% (Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhs</td>
<td>63.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russians</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbeks</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukrainians</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uygurs</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tatars</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germans</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The 1996 presidential Concept of the Language Policy outlines the steps to be taken in order to ensure the Kazakh language domination. The document provides that a list of professions and positions should be prepared for which the knowledge of the state language would be necessary. The laws of the Republic should then state this list. Such approaches lead to the creation of strong economic and social incentives for people to master the Kazakh language. Further, the concept to increase the compulsory use of the Kazakh language was developed in the 1998 Presidential Decree on Functioning and Development of Languages. It emphasizes the increasing demands for the use of the state language (Dave, 2003). In terms of professional use, the Decree calls for all the government paperwork to be done in Kazakh. According to the Decree, good conditions will be created for the use of the Kazakh language in science, education, culture, state administration, mass media and international relations. The Decree also demands provision of free Kazakh language instruction, so that the usage in the public sphere will be expanded. These provisions indicate a will to broaden the obligatory public usage of Kazakh (Commercio, 2004).

Unifying function is performed by the standard language in uniting speakers of various dialects within a single community oriented toward the standard (Mathiot, 1975). According to statistics, Kazakhstan has about 63.1 percent ethnic Kazakhs, 23.7 percent ethnic Russians, with Uzbeks, Ukrainians, Uygurs, Tatars, Germans and other ethnic groups. The Russian language is widely used in business, government interactions and plays a role of unifying function. Linguistically, Kazakhstan was the most russified of all the Central Asian republics (Dave, 2003). Ethnological research in urban population estimated that 60-75% of Kazakhs spoke exclusively Russian (Dave, 2004). It is known, that Russian is still co-official and also widely spoken even by many (bilingual) ethnic Kazakhs. Most of Kazakhs often favor Russian over to Kazakh, even when communicating with family members (though this might not be representative). In addition, Russian serves as a lingua franca throughout Central Asia and since Kazakhstan is home to a very large number of ethnic groups, Russian serves as the primary language of inter-ethnic communication.
Integrative function involves the symbolic significance of a language for group solidarity, identity and socio-cultural integration at the local, regional or national levels across different language and social groups (Ammon, 2012).

By studying the language and culture of other nations, a person becomes equal and will not need to make humble requests, said (Cartledge, 2005). The great poet and philosopher Abai Kunanbayev wrote in his works that learning of Persian, Arabic and Russian languages was necessary in the development of the nation. Nevertheless, his words are applicable and relevant even nowadays, especially at the time when all significant events and processes in the world are held in the English language (Kunanbayeva, 2016).

English plays a role of an integrative function, because of its penetrating in our life. More than 450 million people around the world consider English as their native language and 98 million people as their second language. It is the most important language in more than 60 countries. English is the native language of 12 nations and the official and semi-official language of 33 additional nations. This means that every seventh person in the world speaks English. Knowledge of English can help to communicate in every imaginable situation at any point of the world. Thus, different languages depending upon the speech community and its social context may implement all of these functions.

DATA ANALYSIS

Today, Kazakh, Russian and English are to be used in scientific publications, in university guides, in names of faculties, and on web sites.

The increasing interest to the English language in higher educational institutions over the last few decades is a cumulative process resulting in academic communication worldwide. Universities in Kazakhstan deliver programs (online-seminars, webinars, evening clubs, and watching films) to learn English or materials to improve students language proficiency (papers, publications, guides, and books). Not only students, but also teachers are interested in learning English. Many international programs require the higher knowledge of English in order to study abroad or to be enrolled to the higher institutions. For this, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan awards scholarships and credits for postgraduates and doctoral studies; provides financial assistance for study trip abroad. For this purpose, students, postgraduates and teachers should know English and pass International Exams as IELTS or TOEFL. There are special requirements for teachers, scholars in order to get professor degree in university. One of the main requirements is to have three scientific papers or publications in international journals with a high impact factor. According to the world dynamics of publications, each year the amount of scientific works of Kazakhstani scholars are increasing in comparison with previous years (Table 2).
Table 2: The ranking of publications in web of science core collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Amount of Publications in Kazakhstan</th>
<th>Amount of Publications in the World</th>
<th>Fraction of Kazakhstan (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>749</td>
<td>2,236,768</td>
<td>0.033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>980</td>
<td>2,327,292</td>
<td>0.042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>1,408</td>
<td>2,400,237</td>
<td>0.058</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>1,769</td>
<td>2,556,440</td>
<td>0.069</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>1,773</td>
<td>2,493,730</td>
<td>0.071</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to data offered by the Ministry of Education and Science, universities of Kazakhstan have expanded their multilingual groups since 2008. New subjects such as Professionally Oriented Kazakh (Russian) Language and Professionally Oriented Foreign Language (English) were introduced into educational curricula of universities. In the area of the development of international cooperation, the main task of state educational policy of Kazakhstan is to implement a complex of measures to create an integrated system of international linkages in the educational field, which would embrace both international and national markets for educational services (Kunanbayeva, 2016).

Professionally Oriented Foreign Language is taught for the second and third year students of non-linguistic specialties of L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University. The aim of this course is to prepare professionally qualified students with knowledge of English for their future profession and career. The students competence in skills development is measured by their ability to understand and produce written and spoken language in a professional context, to perform the following academic tasks:

- Reading and understanding written professional language.
- Writing assignments in an appropriate style for professional purposes.
- Listening and comprehending spoken professional language.
- Speaking on general and professional topics in formal and informal situations.

Thus, based on trilingual education model, students are able to improve their language skills in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Moreover, this model helps them to acquire language proficiency in Kazakh, Russian, and English. Owing to this model, expressive, unifying and integrative language functions are closely interrelated during the educational process. Students expand their grammar and vocabulary knowledge, review scientific papers, interpret the meanings of professional terminologies, and apply the received information for specific purposes.

**DISCUSSION**

This study of development of trilingual education in universities includes:

- Focus group interviews with 63 students of non-linguistic specialties;
- Questionnaire focusing on language attitudes and views of trilingual education.

The questionnaire allows collecting quantitative (and to some extent qualitative) data about the attitude towards trilingual education. Moreover, questionnaire gives possibility to deepen students attitudes towards learning three languages. The students of bachelor, master, and doctorate degrees took part in this questionnaire. There were 82.5% of students aged from 16 to 20; 15.9% aged from 21 to 30; and 1.6% aged from 31 to 40. Among them were 66.7% - female, 33.3% - male.

The most interesting fact is that only 44.3% of students speak Kazakh fluently, while 27.9% are fluent in Kazakh, Russian and English. Only 16.4% of students speak and understand Kazakh and Russian 52% of students speak Kazakh and Russian with friends and colleagues (Figure 3).

In spite of students preference to speak Kazakh and Russian with friends and colleagues, 79% of students are studied in multilingual groups in higher educational institutions. About 250 disciplines are taught in foreign languages in L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University. There are some special requirements to study and to be enrolled in multilingual groups. According to the questionnaire, students need to have not only the special language certificate of passing International Examinations, but also the high scores of English knowledge (Figure 4).
This is a great opportunity and incentive for students to learn English and study successfully. Every academic term students can participate in programs of academic mobility and continue their education in other universities of the world. Today, L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University has made contracts with 116 universities around the world. According to the program of academic mobility, students should have 6.0 and more points of IELTS for technical specialties; and 6.5 points for humanities. A study abroad by the academic mobility program encourages students to improve multiple perspectives, and know more alternative ways of learning.

English is one of the main subjects in higher educational institutions of Kazakhstan. Students of all faculties learn English during the first and second year. As a result of a questionnaire, conducted among students, it was proven that English is more difficult to learn than Kazakh and Russian (Figure 5).
According to the questionnaire, 60% of students choose English for the learning as the most difficult language in comparison with Kazakh (30%) and Russian (10%). Therefore, the prestigious language is considered Kazakh (40%). The reason is that the Kazakh language is closely connected with the group of Turkish languages. More than 100 nationalities live in Kazakhstan. Mongolian, Kyrgyz, Uygur, Turkish, Altaic (Finnish, Korean, Hungarian) languages are related to each other and have some similarities because of the borrowing words (Figure 6).

One of the questions of the questionnaire: Why would students like to know three languages? The students answered differently. It is known that students have definite goals in life and points of view. Nobody had the same point of view with regard to trilingual education.

CONCLUSION

The present research is devoted to developing a trilingual education in higher educational institutions of Kazakhstan. The model of trilingual education allows adopting new techniques of teaching Kazakh, Russian and English languages based on expressive, unifying and integrative language functions. Each language is considered as a variable and an alternative medium of instruction at a particular educational level in education system of Kazakhstan.

The results of this research present the real picture of the current situation of trilingual education in Kazakhstan. This research shows that Kazakh, Russian and English languages in educational process fulfill expressive, unifying, and integrative language functions. Owing to these functions, the model of trilingual education presumes the obsessing of all language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking). As a result of a survey, many students prefer to know three languages equally; to take much benefit for continuation of their study in universities of other countries; to be competitive at current integrated world; to study in multilingual groups of the university; to participate in International Programs; to pass International Exams and to get maximum points.

Developing and implementation of the model of trilingual education in higher educational institutions of Kazakhstan speed up the improvement of language skills and updating of educational programs in all degrees (bachelor, master, and doctorate).

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