

## MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION – A STEP INTO THE BETTER FUTURE

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**Abstract.** *Contemporary globalizing processes are often associated with plurilingualism, translanguaging and multiliteracies that foster the implementation of multilingual education in the countries facing an increasing diversity: the mass migration of population, the growing number of refugees, settlements of ethnic minorities.*

*The paper deals with the presentation of the latest state policies directed towards the implementation of multilingual education in Georgia – in the post-Soviet country, which has undergone drastic changes during the last decades. In the Soviet epoch, mastering Georgian or Russian was a prerequisite of a rightful citizenship. After the dissolution of the USSR, mastering Georgian started being obligatory for occupying positions in governmental institutions, organizations, etc. This fact marginalized those representatives of ethnic minorities, who had a poor knowledge of the state language. The government initiated the implementation of multilingual educational policies preventing marginalization of ethnic minorities and facilitating the rearing of plurilingual citizens sharing equal rights and responsibilities. The paper presents certain insights into the multilingual education and makes specific proposals regarding the:*

- *usage of innovative teaching methods, models and approaches (CLIL approach, heteroglossic approach);*
- *creation of an appropriate lesson design;*
- *implementation of intensive training-courses focused on the acquisition of intercultural and cross-national skills, etc.*

*The methodology of research includes observation, analysis and evaluation of ongoing processes.*

**Keywords:** *cross-national, method, multilingualism, policies, translanguaging.*

### Introduction

Contemporary globalizing processes present “bunches” of challenges and prospects. Minor or tremendous changes can be seen in almost all spheres of life. Aspiration to the diversity is accompanied by the strive towards the unity that

results in the attempts to protect *self* and respect *other*. The self-protection is usually associated with the safeguarding of a language – “a carrier of identity and culture... a primary tool for the expression of the self in society” (WaThiongo, 1986). A language determines a cross-cultural competence and becomes a crucial tool of communication in a multicultural society. Multiculturalism and plurilingualism are contemporary “global tendencies”, which stipulate the existence of several languages within a single domain. During the last decades, plurilingualism has become “a fundamental principle of language education policies in Europe and elsewhere in the world” (Grigule, 2011). A simultaneous acquisition of two or more languages has gained the priority in the educational arena. States have strived to implement multilingual educational strategies for answering the demands of the modern epoch, for the prevention of ethnic confrontation and promotion of socialization of the representatives of different nationalities.

The paper deals with the presentation of the latest state policies directed towards the implementation of multilingual education in Georgia – in the post-Soviet country, which has undergone drastic changes during the last decades. In the Soviet epoch, mastering Georgian or Russian was a prerequisite of a rightful citizenship. After the dissolution of the USSR, Georgian became the major language of education. Its mastering started being obligatory for occupying positions in governmental institutions, organizations, educational centers, etc. This fact marginalized those representatives of ethnic minorities, who had no knowledge or a poor knowledge of the state language. The government initiated the implementation of multilingual educational policies preventing marginalization of ethnic minorities and facilitating the rearing of plurilingual citizens sharing equal rights and responsibilities. The paper presents certain insights into the multilingual education and makes specific proposals regarding the usage of innovative teaching methods, formation of an appropriate lesson design and implementation of intensive training-courses focused on the acquisition of intercultural as well as cross-national skills or competences.

### **Innovative Educational Tendencies**

“In the recent years one of the trends of the national policy in Georgia like in other multiethnic countries has been promotion of the study of the official language for the representatives of minorities parallel with the preservation and development of their mother language, culture and traditions” (Shubitidze, 2011). Implementation of multilingual educational programs has become a top priority for the civil integration of the Armenians, the Azerbaijanis, the Russians, etc., who reside in different parts of Georgia. According to the census of 2014, the total number of inhabitants of Georgia “is 3 713 804... Georgian population makes

86.8%... Azeri and Armenian population are the second and third representative ethnic groups comparing with others and make respectively 6.27% and 4.53%” (Gorgadze, 2006). The Azerbaijanis reside in Kvemo Kartli region, while the Armenians mainly inhabit Samthkhe-Javakheti region (Ninotsminda and Akhalkalaki districts). During the Soviet epoch, mastering Russian (lingua franca of the USSR) facilitated full integration of ethnic minorities into Georgia’s socio-cultural life. However, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, non-Georgian population started being marginalized due to the lack of the knowledge of the Georgian language. The government initiated the implementation of bi/multilingual education programs as a part of the general education. The process was not sustainable, because the innovative mode of education implied “teaching academic subjects in the native and second languages simultaneously” (Shubitidze, 2011). Schools, educators, policy makers were not ready for new challenges.

### **Innovative Approaches and Lesson Design**

“If the bilingual education and programs are customized to the individual needs of the students where their age, surroundings, social status, national and cultural peculiarities, physical and mental abilities are taken into consideration, the bilingual education will bring only positive results to schools” (Baker, 2006). However, successful educational policies necessitate picking up appropriate methods of teaching. During the Soviet epoch, Georgia’s schools were oriented to the traditional monoglossic approach, which was in tune with the monolinguals’ repertoires. The existence of different-language schools justified the given orientation: Russian pupils could study in Russian schools, the Azerbaijanis could attend Azerbaijani classes, etc. After the dissolution of the Soviet educational system, a monoglossic approach has been treated as an obsolete tendency, which had marginalized the representatives of ethnic minorities. Educators have been searching for new methods in the western strategies of teaching.

We, as the educators, believe that the modern epoch necessitates the shift to the innovative heteroglossic approach, which is mainly oriented to the introduction of multilingual texts (presenting samples from two languages), incorporation of bi/multilingual dialogues and creation of classroom activities promoting translanguaging. “An increasing body of research suggests that heteroglossic practices in education facilitate the connection of student home languages and literacy practices with school literacy practices in ways that are relevant to their lives” (Kiramba, 2016). If a monoglossic tradition corroborates only monolingual repertoires, heteroglossic “beliefs and practices... view the multiple languages of bilinguals as multiple and co-existing... Bilingual

educational policies... [are] responding to local interests, ideologies and contexts” (Garcia, 2009). The following list reveals the major outcomes of two approaches that indicate to the superiority and a prevailing position of a heteroglossic approach.

*Table 1 Superiority of a Heteroglossic Approach*

<b>Results of a heteroglossic approach</b>	<b>Results of a monoglossic approach</b>
<i>Promotes translanguaging</i>	<i>Excludes translanguaging</i>
<i>Broadens learning opportunities</i>	<i>Limits learning opportunities</i>
<i>Gives equal opportunities of self-expression to bi/multilinguals</i>	<i>Silences some bi/multilinguals</i>
<i>Activates all learners</i>	<i>Marginalizes some learners</i>
<i>Enables each learner to visualize and value self and other</i>	<i>Enables each learner to visualize and value self</i>
<i>Promotes the knowledge of diverse cultures</i>	<i>Avoids diversity via promoting the knowledge of a particular culture</i>
<i>Promotes the formation of a competitive individual, because plurilingualism is the foundation of the worldly-circulation</i>	<i>Promotes the formation of a less-competitive individual</i>

We conducted observations on two multi-ethnic groups of first-year students during chemistry classes at THU (Tbilisi Humanitarian Teaching University). In total, 60 students of different nationalities – the Georgians, the Azerbaijanis, the Armenians, the Abkhazians – were allowed to carry out chemical experiments during practical classes (2 hours per week). The experiments comprised two stages:

- explanatory, demonstratory and experimental activities of the supervisor;
- experiments carried out by the students.

During the first stage, the supervisor’s activities – retelling, demonstrating, explaining – activated the visual as well as the auditory perception. At the second stage, the students touched the tools, made experiments and named all procedures that activated visual, auditory and kinesthetic senses. During two initial classes, the only language of instruction was Russian. The students with the less command of the Russian language were passive, marginalized and less reluctant to participate in the experiments. After two weeks, the supervisor started explanation in two languages (translanguaging) and asked the students to use their mother tongues as well as the languages of instruction for naming tools during experimental activities (a heteroglossic approach). As a result, all students became

more active, listened to one another carefully, enjoyed shifting from one language to another. Their achievements gradually became better.

Therefore, the observations revealed that the best results of teaching could be achieved via the usage of a heteroglossic approach in association with VAK/VAKT (Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic, & Tactile) learning styles. The given complex is generally well-observed in science classes, where a multilingual atmosphere of laboratory activities can encourage auditory, visual and even kinesthetic learners. A simultaneous usage of home and target languages during chemical experiments, analyses and observations enhances the understanding of subject-area concepts, specific terms and phrases. It activates all learners, broadens their learning opportunities and develops proficiency in a language of instruction via promoting translanguaging.

It is noteworthy that besides monoglossic and heteroglossic traditions of teaching, western educational bodies make distinction between CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) and EMI (English-medium Instruction) approaches. The intensive implementation of the latter is stipulated by the worldwide spread of the English language and its usage as a medium of instruction for academic subjects such as science, mathematics, geography and medicine. Moreover, EMI approach “mainly focuses on content learning and little or no special attention is paid to language learning” (Sánchez, Pérez, & Ramiro, 2017).

In contrast to EMI, Content and Language Integrated Learning can be regarded as the approach, which “fuses two inherent and interdependent elements in education. The strength of CLIL is the offering of an educational view which allows learners and the wider community to experience knowledge construction holistically” (Banegas, 2017). “Among the cognitive benefits, CLIL boosts risk-taking, problem-solving, vocabulary learning skills, grammatical awareness, and spontaneity in using the language” (Panov, 2018). Content and Language Integrated Learning “is not primarily about the subject teacher’s *additional* responsibility to pay attention to language, but about the *inherent* role of language in teaching and learning” (Banegas, 2017). The following list reveals the major characteristics of two approaches.

*Table 2 Superiority of CLIL Approach*

<b>CLIL Approach</b>	<b>EMI Approach</b>
<i>Focuses on content learning</i>	<i>Focuses on content learning</i>
<i>Pays a special attention to language learning</i>	<i>Pays no special attention to language learning</i>
<i>Allows experiencing knowledge construction holistically</i>	<i>Does not allow experiencing knowledge construction holistically</i>

The given list reveals the superiority and a prevailing position of CLIL approach. It seems more adequate to the needs of multiethnic groups of Georgia's educational institutions. We believe that a holistic language & content teaching is more effective, overwhelming and inclusive for students with weaker state language abilities. However, the best results are achieved when CLIL approach is accompanied by an appropriate lesson design. The most effective design was proposed by American educator M. Hunter, whose model for teaching and learning was widely adopted during the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. M. Hunter's research indicated that the following elements constituted an effective lesson:

- “1) **Anticipatory Set** – A short activity, dispatch or prompt that focuses the students' attention and ties previous lessons to today's lesson.
- 2) **Purpose** – An explanation of the importance of this lesson and a statement concerning what students will be able to do when they have completed it.
- 3) **Input** – The vocabulary, skills, and concepts to be learned.
- 4) **Modeling** – The teacher demonstrates what is to be learned.
- 5) **Guided Practice** – The teacher leads the students through the steps necessary to perform the skill using multiple modalities.
- 6) **Checking For Understanding** – The teacher uses a variety of questioning strategies to determine if the students are understanding.
- 7) **Independent Practice** – The teacher releases students to practice on their own.
- 8) **Closure** – A review or wrap-up” (Elements of Lesson Design).

We practiced Dr. M. Hunter's model during 2016–2018 in three multiethnic groups of students attending the course “The Structure of the English Language” at Tbilisi State University. The groups comprised the Georgians, the Azerbaijanis and the Armenians. Each lecture focused on a short activity devoting the students' attention to the previous lesson and practiced almost all elements of M. Hunter's model accompanied via an individual as well as a group/pair work. Initially, the lecturer practiced only English as the language of instruction and interaction. Afterwards, she shifted to translanguaging – a simultaneous usage of English and Georgian. This shift raised the students' comprehension, facilitated their non-marginalization and more active involvement in classroom activities. At the end of the semester, the final marks of the above-mentioned groups were compared with the achievements of those groups, which attended the same course during 2012-2016 and practiced an ordinary post-Soviet lesson design. The comparison revealed that the students taught via M. Hunter's model had higher marks and better achievements. We believe that the better marks could be achieved if the lecturer used the Armenian and Azerbaijani languages during classroom activities.

Therefore, the practice revealed that a successful lesson design necessitated using translanguaging and focusing on explanatory as well as anticipatory activities. Moreover, each individual work should be followed by a group-work or a pair-work facilitating brainstorming, translanguaging, non-marginalization and interacting. We consider these strategies as the pillars of the intercultural communication, mutual understanding and acquisition of cross-national competences.

### **Preparation of the Personnel**

One of the key factors of a successful implementation of multilingual educational programs in Georgia is an in-service education of teachers. “Teachers are the most important factor (in coordinating initiatives) and the most delicate. For the establishment of a coordinated program to be effective, one of the prerequisites is the presence of motivated and eager-to-participate teacher” (Panov, 2018), whose qualification and cross-national skills determine the boosting of a plurilingual circulation.

Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sport of Georgia is open to the issue of the implementation of training courses for bilingual educators. During 2012-2016, several trainings were held within the framework of the international project *DIMTEGU* (Development and Introduction of Multilingual Teacher Education programs at Universities of Georgia and Ukraine) carried out under the leadership of Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University (TSU). The same project initiated the implementation of “One-year program of multilingual education” approved by the Resolution of the Government of Georgia (N.68/20.02.2015) on Teachers’ Training, Professional Development and Career Growth. One-year program was adopted by the Academic Board of TSU and after going through the state accreditation, it will be implemented at the Faculty of Education and Psychology under the supervision of Prof. Nino Sharashenidze.

“One-year program of multilingual education” offers a holistic attitude towards the education of bilingual teachers. It considers:

- teaching compulsory theoretical subjects related to pedagogy - *Teaching methods and strategies; Educational psychology, learning and development theories; Management of diversity in the classroom / Inclusive education; Introduction to second language teaching and learning theories; Introduction to content and language integrated learning / bilingual education, etc.* (40 ECTS);
- compulsory pedagogical practice (10 ECTS);
- elective modules - *subject teaching methods in: mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, history, geography, social education, Georgian as*

*the second language, Armenian as a native language, Azeri as a native language, English as a foreign language (10 ECTS).*

The implementation of the given program will be a new direction of Georgia's educational space. However, we believe that its strategic perspective should be reinforced via the supervision or perpetual cooperation with European universities having an outstanding experience in the preparation of bilingual educators. The program may envisage the invitation of foreign professors/trainees, especially, in the fields (CLIL approach and subject teaching methods in non-humanitarian subjects), which are less-experienced in Georgia. Moreover, educational processes can be enriched with study visits abroad.

### **Summary**

The paper discusses the latest tendencies of Georgia's educational system. The major accent is put on the presentation of the state policies directed towards the implementation of multilingual education preventing marginalization of ethnic minorities and facilitating the rearing of plurilingual citizens sharing equal rights and responsibilities. The paper presents certain insights into the creation of an appropriate lesson design as well as the usage of innovative teaching methods, models, approaches (CLIL approach, heteroglossic approach) and training techniques. The following recommendations are made for the better implementation of the envisaged innovations:

- multi-ethnic groups should be taught via using a heteroglossic approach promoting translanguaging and CLIL;
- in science classes a heteroglossic approach should be associated with VAK/VAKT learning styles;
- CLIL approach should be accompanied by an appropriate lesson design promoting learners' participation during explanatory and anticipatory activities, simultaneous usage of individual, group and pair works, etc.;
- foreign scholars supervision or perpetual cooperation should be involved in "One-year program of multilingual education".

### **Conclusions**

Contemporary globalizing processes are often associated with plurilingualism, translanguaging and multiliteracies that foster the implementation of multilingual education in the countries facing an increasing diversity: the mass migration of population, the growing number of refugees, settlements of ethnic minorities as well as migrants.



On the background of these global tendencies, the Republic of Georgia faces the need of the civil integration of the Armenians, the Azerbaijanis, the Russians and other ethnic minorities, who reside in different parts of Georgia. Implementation of multilingual educational programs has become a top priority in this respect. Georgia's educational bodies share the slogan "Multilingual education – a step into the better future" via attempting to facilitate multilingualism and translanguaging in multiethnic groups. The given attempts need reasonable planning and an adequate formulation of challenges. The paper presents certain insights into the multilingual education and makes specific proposals regarding the usage of innovative teaching methods, formation of an appropriate lesson design and implementation of intensive training-courses focused on the acquisition of intercultural as well as cross-national skills or competences.

We believe that adherence to the recommendations will ensure a successful development of state policies directed towards the integration of ethnic minorities via innovative educational strategies. Georgia's policies can become useful for other post-Soviet countries, which strive to implement western-oriented strategies.

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