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SUSTAINING LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL BALANCE IN MULTILINGUAL SOUTH AFRICA

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Abstract. The present research into the linguistic situation in the Republic of South Africa, which is characterized by the legislative support of multilingualism and equality between the official languages, is relevant because of the danger of a loss of linguistic and cultural diversity in the former colonies of the African continent, most of which, on achieving independence, granted the status of official language only to the language of the former metropolis. The goal of the given article is finding out the nature of interrelations between languages and cultures in multilingual South Africa, and determining the functions which South African languages perform in various spheres of the country's activities. In accordance with the set goal, the authors sought answers to a number of questions connected with interrelations of languages in South Africa as well as the role of English as one of the official languages. The most important of these questions are the following: 1) which of the official or unofficial South African languages performs the role of the language of common communication (lingua franca)?; 2) is the language balance in South Africa stable, and does the English language present a danger to the linguistic and cultural diversity of the country?; 3) what are the reasons for the difficulties connected with realizing in South Africa the policies of the equality of the official languages?

Keywords: multilingualism and multiculturalism; linguistic balance; the language of common communication; lingua franca; globalization; ethnocultural identity.

Introduction

Revolutionary changes in the political, economic, scientific and cultural life of the peoples of the world during the last two centuries have brought about changes in the views of the linguistic picture of the world. Research connected with the study of linguistic and cultural diversity of the world has allowed us to draw conclusions about naturalness of multilingualism as a way of linguistic organization of the world [1: 23-25]. The most important result of the academic research in the field of multilingualism and multiculturalism has turned out to be the realization of the necessity of the changes in the linguistic policies at all levels of state government in connection with the challenges put forward by linguistic and cultural globalization, in the course of which the English language has acquired the status of the global language used for common interlingual and intercultural communication in the world [2: 4-14].

One of the most vulnerable regions of the world in the struggle for the preservation of the linguistic and cultural diversity of the planet is the multi-

lingual African continent, where many languages and cultures are on the verge of disappearance. The present research is dedicated to the study of the peculiarities of multilingualism in one of the countries of the English speaking world in Africa, namely in the Republic of South Africa, and its goal is to find out the nature of interrelations of languages and cultures there and to determine the functions of the official and unofficial languages in this country. To achieve this goal, the authors sought answers to the following questions: 1) what are the ways of carrying out interlingual and intercultural communication in South Africa?; 2) do the European languages, and, first of all, the English language present a danger to linguistic and cultural diversity of the country?; 3) what is the degree of success of the language policies in South Africa in support of equality of the official languages?

Methodology

The following methods adhering to the principle of systemic approach to the analysis of the investigated phenomena were used in the given research: historical method, which allows determining the place of the considered phenomena in the general sociocultural and linguistic situation of the world at different stages of development; linguistic method, which allows determining the influence of linguistic phenomena in the period of globalization and transformation of English into the language of worldwide communication; comparative method, which is necessary in determining the specifics of using languages as means of interlingual communication in various spheres of activities; analytical method, allowing to determine peculiarities of complex interaction of language and culture as well as the role of language functioning in a multilingual and multicultural society; systemic method, allowing to reveal interconnection of various linguistic and cultural phenomena and their complex influence on the interlingual and intercultural communication in the period of globalization.

The methodological basis of the present investigation rests on the works of scientists in the field of multilingualism [3, 4], in the field of research into the English language as means of international communication [5-7], in the field of language policies in the countries with colonial past [8-10] and in research on linguistic diversity [11, 12].

Research and discussion

Multilingual countries of the Anglophone world of the African continent to the south of the Sahara with predominantly black population, with the exception of East African states, in their language policies promote preferential use of the English language in the functions of state governance, education and courts of law, having granted English the status of the only

official language legislatively, or, using it in this status de facto. In the English speaking countries of East Africa, the status of the official language, alongside with English, is accorded to the African language Swahili, but in practice the English language continues to dominate in the most important spheres of the country's life, particularly in Kenya and Uganda. An ever increasing role of the English language in the former British colonies, which acquired independence in the 60s of the 20th century, presents, in the opinion of many academics and politicians, a threat to the linguistic and cultural diversity of the most multilingual region of the world.

In connection with the criticism aimed at the policies of using European languages in Africa as the main or only official languages, the multilingual policy of the Republic of South Africa is of special interest for both academics and politicians. In fact, South Africa is one of the few countries of the world where the number of official languages exceeds two. By the number of official languages it is second only to Bolivia, where, according to the Constitution of 2009, the status of official languages is granted to Spanish and to 37 indigenous languages of the country [13]. In another multilingual country, India, which is presented as an example of the country with the greatest number of official languages after Bolivia, the number of "constitutional languages" makes up 22, not counting English. However, only Hindi and English are recognized as official languages, with English having the status of the "associated official language". The other languages included into the so-called "Eighth Schedule to the Constitution" have the status of official languages only at the level of the states of the union and union territories [14].

According to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA), eleven languages have the status of the official languages of the country. Apart from Afrikaans and English, as official are recognized nine of the most widespread languages of the indigenous peoples of Africa, particularly the Bantu languages Zulu and Xhosa, which are spoken by almost half of the population of the republic. The South African Constitution takes into account other languages as well, which allows it to reflect more fully the linguistic diversity in the country that emerged as the result of interaction of African, European and Eurasian cultures. Six languages of the indigenous people of Africa, including the South African sign language, have received the status of unofficial languages. The other languages, including African languages, the languages of settlers from India and religious languages (such as Arabic, Hebrew and Sanskrit) are declared as the heritage languages. Section 6 (Languages) in Chapter One of the RSA Constitution of 1996, in Paragraph (1) presents a list of the official languages of the country. Paragraph (2) of Section 6 recognizes "the historically diminished use and status of indigenous languages" of the South African peoples and declares that "the state must take practical and positive measures to elevate the status and ad-

vance the use of these languages” [15]. In Paragraphs (3), and (4) of Section 6, the rules of the use of official languages are established, according to which the national government and provincial governments “may use any particular official languages for the purposes of government, taking into account usage, practicality, expense, regional circumstances and the balance of the needs and preferences of the population as a whole or in the province concerned, but the national government and each provincial government must use at least two official languages” [Ibid]. Paragraph (4) of Section 6 also states that “All official languages must enjoy parity of esteem and must be treated equitably” [Ibid]. Paragraph (5) of Section 6 on languages instructed the Pan South African Language Board, established by the national legislation to “a) promote, and create conditions for the development and use of all official and unofficial languages; and b) to promote and ensure respect for all languages commonly used by communities in South Africa, including German, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Portuguese, Tamil, Telegu and Urdu, as well as Arabic, Hebrew, Sanskrit and other languages used for religious purposes in South Africa” [Ibid].

The official multilingualism in the RSA is the result of a prolonged struggle of the black population of the country and the world community against the policies of race discrimination and segregation pursued by the white minority, starting from the foundation of the South African Union in 1910. In 1948, when the party representing the interests of Afrikaners, the descendands of white colonists, came to power, the race segregation was elevated to the level of official state policy of apartheid. The black population of the country was stripped of civil rights and liberties. The political rights of the blacks were limited to special territories, so-called ‘bantustans’, which were established according to tribal adherence. In the 60s of the 20th century, the leader of the struggle of the black majority of the country for civil rights, Nelson Mandela, was imprisoned for life, and his party, the African National Congress, banned. A decisive factor in ending the policy of apartheid and in establishing in the RSA of the principles of multilingualism and multiculturalism was the support of the world community and, first of all, of the countries of the Commonwealth of Nations. Particularly effective proved to be economic sanctions, since South African economy’s dependence on international trade is very high. In 1990, having found itself in political and economic isolation, the RSA government agreed to talks with the black South African leaders. The talks resulted in establishing the Interim Constitution of 1993, which brought to an end all limitations on the development of African languages and provided a legislative support for the country’s multilingualism. The ban on the African National Union and other political organizations opposing the policy of discrimination and apartheid was lifted. The leader of the anti-apartheid movement, Nelson Mandela, was re-

leased from prison after the 27-year imprisonment on a charge of subversive activities.

The general election of 1994, in which the black population of South Africa got voting rights for the first time, brought victory to the African National Congress. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa drawn on the basis of 34 constitutional principles of the Interim Constitution of 1994 was adopted in 1996, and it consolidated political, cultural and language rights of the black majority of the country. After coming into force in 1997, the Constitution of the RSA served as a basis for new language policies, which put an end to bilingualism on the basis of English and Afrikaans. The sphere of official African languages started to expand. The African languages came into use, even though infrequently, in parliamentary debates, television programmes and social events.

The practical realization of the policies of multilingualism and promotion of the development of African languages, in spite of the legislative support in the Constitution, proved to be much more complicated than it was expected. In 1996, a special research group of the RSA on multilingualism LANGTAG (Language Task Group) on the basis of their research arrived at the conclusion that “in spite of the political will to promote multilingualism, public institutions, including education, are becoming ever more monolingual. The other official languages are marginalized” [16].

In more than twenty years since the adoption of the Constitution, the government undertook several efforts directed at increasing the use of indigenous languages in the most important sphere of promoting multilingualism, that is in education. As studies of language policies in South African schools show, the constitutional statements have not caused any considerable influence on the practice of medium of instruction selection by the country's schools. Thus, as a result of research conducted by Claire deBoer, it was found out that at present in South African education the status quo that existed in South African education system before the adoption of the Constitution is factually unchanged: 1) the English language is the only language that is offered in every school, 2) relatively few schools offer African languages in their curricula, 3) schools with Afrikaans as a medium of instruction do not include African languages in the educational process [17].

The contrast between the theory and practice of multilingualism is explained by the linguistic situation in South Africa, in which, as Kathleen Thorpe points out, “good English language skills serve as a pass to social mobility and well paid jobs of the middle class” [18].

The domination of the English language in all spheres of the social life of the RSA, including education, in spite of the fact that English is native only to 8.5 percent of the country's population, is explained by many researchers by the consequences of adopting by the apartheid government in 1953 of the Legislative Act 47, known as Bantu Education Act. According to

this legislative act, the children of Bantu peoples had to be educated in indigenous languages not only in the first four years of primary school, but also in the next four years. The Education Act also required that Afrikaans and English were used on a parity basis. The insufficiency of language training in European languages as the result of extending training in indigenous languages deprived most of the black African students of an opportunity to continue their education at higher stages on equitable basis, as it was carried out only in English and Afrikaans as mediums of instruction.

The language policies based on the Legislative Act 47 of 1953, as Kwesi Prah writes, “imposed limitations on the access of black South African students to the languages of power, that is to English and Afrikaans” [19]. The black population resisted the introduction of education in indigenous languages, as they saw in it one of the strategies of the apartheid policy aimed at erecting barriers on its way to higher education and to equal participation in the economic and political life of the country. Besides, the African movement against segregation and apartheid regarded Afrikaans as the language of oppression and suppression of rights and liberties of African peoples. Therefore, resistance to the introduction of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in school education assumed the forms of symbolic resistance to the policy of apartheid. The bloody events that went down in history as Soweto Uprising of 1976, started in a segregated black settlement, twelve miles from Johannesburg, with a demonstration of school students against compulsory teaching of the Afrikaans language in accordance with the Decree of 1974 (Afrikaans Medium Decree). Student protests soon grew over into chaotic clashes with police. Rioting soon spread to other black townships and resulted in the death of at least 575 people, almost half of whom were black school students from Soweto [20].

Events in Soweto in 1976 brought about the refusal from teaching Afrikaans in schools for black South Africans and to the enhancement of the status of the English language in the education of the black population. One of the consequences of the Bantu Education Act of 1953 was, as the researcher on language policies in South African history, Kathleen Heugh, pointed out, that the English language took dominant positions not only in relation to Afrikaans, but to the African languages [8]. In the opinion of the South African researcher Nkonko Kamwangamalu, the Bantu Education Act of 1953 and the events in Soweto in 1976 had negative consequences for South African multilingualism, as they reflected on the difficulties of expanding the teaching of African languages within the frameworks of the policy of multilingualism declared in the Constitution of the South African Republic of 1996 [9].

Analyzing the evolution of linguistic education in the periods before and after apartheid policies in South Africa, the well-known defender of the policy of multilingualism, the laureate of the Linguapax for 2008, a prize

that is awarded annually for outstanding contribution to linguistic diversity and development of multilingual education, Neville Alexander, remarks that in spite of “an impressive number of institutions and agencies for planning and carrying out language policies”, including the most important of them - the Pan South African Language Board, there is no “strategic clarity” in South Africa concerning the development of language planning. It leads to a “zigzag process” in the period after apartheid, which “presents a unique opportunity of advancement along the road of a really democratic, multilingual and multicultural society” [10]. As a positive example of the policy of multilingualism in South Africa against the general background of failures, Alexander refers to the case of the Western Cape Province, where a plan of 7-year instruction in indigenous languages and gradual introduction of a third language is underway. “On the African continent, Alexander writes, the given action is of revolutionary significance. Nowhere to the South of the Sahara, instruction in the indigenous language is envisaged after the third or the fourth year of school education” [Ibid.].

Thus, the Republic of South Africa displays a positive example of a multilingual society, striving to achieve national unity by way of pursuing the language policy of “additive multilingualism”, that is, achieving mastering by every member of the country’s society other languages while maintaining one’s language skills in their first / native language.

According to the Constitution of the RSA, all public institutions, including schools, must use in their activities not less than two of the eleven official languages. To ensure the realization of the policies of multilingualism and multiculturalism, the government has established an impressive infrastructure of organizations engaged in language planning, creating study materials and development of official South African languages, so that they could be used in education, science research and other spheres, which could be new to them. The official language policies of the South African government are aimed at achieving individual trilingualism, in which every member of the South African society would have language skills, apart from his or her native tongue, in two official languages of the country as well. The major role in carrying out the multilingual policies in the country is played by the system of national education. The RSA is the richest country on the African continent with the highest GDP per capita, which exceeds by many times the GDP index value in other countries of Africa to the South of the Sahara. The RSA’s budget expenses on the national education needs make up to 20 percent as compared to 5-6 percent allocated for education in most of the countries of the given region. However, race differences seen in the distribution of material goods are also observed in the data on the quality of the education provided for the South African school and university students. Education in the senior years of secondary school and in higher education institutions, which is carried out only in English and Afrikaans, is still out of reach

for most of the black African students. Only 14 percent of the black population of the country have secondary and higher education, while for the white population this figure is 65 percent. In spite of all the efforts of the South African government to achieve individual additive multilingualism, the tendency towards English language monolingualism continues. The greatest resistance to the extension of teaching in African languages comes from black South Africans themselves, as they see in the governmental policies directed at the support and promotion of African languages and cultures an attempt to perpetuate the advantages of the white population of the country in getting higher education.

In the RSA, there is a contrast between the official multilingualism *de jure* and official bilingualism *de facto*. From the eleven official languages actually only English and Afrikaans perform the functions of state languages in the work of governmental bodies, and are mostly used in mass media and as media of instruction in senior years of secondary schools and in universities. All the other languages of the country, including both official and unofficial African languages, are used almost exclusively in the function of ethnocultural self-identification. The role of the language of common interlingual communication is played by the English language, which is widely used in the spheres of commerce and higher education, despite the fact that it is native only to 8.5 percent of the country's population [21]. Afrikaans is native to 13.3 percent of the population in South Africa, but, in spite of a long cultivation of English-Afrikaans bilingualism in the period of apartheid, it is widespread only in the western provinces of the country, in the former independent Boer republics of Transvaal and the Orange Free State.

The constitutional support for multilingualism, and steady language policies contributing to sustaining and developing all official and unofficial languages ensure sustaining linguistic and cultural diversity of the Republic of South Africa and a relatively sustained multilingualism and multiculturalism, even though full participation of South African languages in the main spheres of life of the country will require a prolonged period in their development, which depends on the black South Africans themselves. As researcher on the African languages, Julia de Kadt, points out, "the lack of a strong governmental stance on language development solidifies beliefs that the African languages are languages with no economic future, reducing incentives for education in these languages, which in turn significantly lowers the chances that these languages will ever come to be used outside of one's home" [22: 25-27].

Conclusion

To summarize, all interlingual and intercultural barriers in the Republic of South Africa are overcome by means of widespread individual multi-

lingualism in the country, in which most of the country's population are bi / trilingual. The role of the means of common communication is performed by the English language, even though the native English language speakers make up only 8.5 percent of the population. The individual multilingualism in South Africa consists, as a rule, of one's native tongue and two official languages, one of which must be English, as it allows South Africans to communicate across any interlingual barriers without hindrance. The European languages, namely, Afrikaans and English, present no danger to linguistic and cultural diversity of the country because of the division of the functions of languages in South African society: the English language performs the function of the means of interlanguage communication, while the other languages are used for expressing one's ethnocultural identity. Most protected from the processes of language extinction due to globalization are those languages in South Africa that have the status of official languages.

The present research has also revealed the difficulties in carrying out the language policy by the ruling circles of insuring equality of official languages. The inequality of the official languages, in spite of the constitutional guaranties, continues to exist, and is explained, first of all, by the resistance of the black community to a wider use of African languages in education, because they perceive this policy as an attempt to deprive the black community of language skills in the languages of power.

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