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The Language Peculiarities of Internationalization of Higher Education in Modern Kazakhstan

Abstract. In article the directions of internationalization of education in the Republic of Kazakhstan, which have their own features, are considered. Progress of the al-Farabi Kazakh national university that has completely adopted educational programs, conforming to the international standards is noted. The university shows positive dynamics in the sphere of expansion of the international cooperation, the academic mobility, and development of social partnership that caused advance of al-Farabi KazNU in a world rating and its occurrence in top-300 best universities of the world. Prospects of development of the academic mobility promoting further successful inclusion of al-Farabi KazNU in global scientific and educational space are outlined.

According to the State program of development and functioning of languages and the project «Trinity of Languages», the Kazakh language surely raises the positions in communicative and language space of the republic, and in education. Besides, teaching in English is developed promptly at schools and higher education institutions of Kazakhstan; Russian, despite reduction of volume of its use, keeps an important role in the sphere of the higher education that causes language features of internationalization of education in the republic.

Key words: internationalization of education, the Kazakh national university, the project «Trinity of Languages», features of a language situation in RK, languages in the sphere of the higher education of Kazakhstan.

Introduction

Internationalization of higher education which is considered to be a process of international and intercultural aspects integration, as a rule, has two main trends in its aim and ways of granting higher education. The first aspect, called *internal internationalization*, is supposed to create such an atmosphere and culture in the higher institution maintaining and enhancing international and intercultural mutual understanding, feasible programs, research and projects which meet the requirements of international standards and are carried out cooperatively with foreign specialists. The second aspect—*external internationalization*— is a process of trans-border provision of educational products and services to foreign countries with the help of educational technologies and administrative agreements (on students' academic mobility, academic exchanges, etc.). Thus, tens of thousands of students from Kazakhstan are studying at Universities of the Russian Federation, the People's Republic of China, Western Europe, and North America.

To internationalize higher education it is necessary to actively enter the global scientific and educational space where the dominant position belongs to the English language, the study of which is considered the index of internationalization of education by the international educational community.

With reference to the Republic of Kazakhstan this trend of internationalization of higher education is in the trail head at present, nevertheless, it is rapidly developing: new specialized English teaching schools have been established, students of some leading universities of the Republic are getting knowledge exclusively in English (Nazarbayev University, KIMEP University, Kazakh-British Technical University), academic mobility—international exchange of students and professors— is being practised. First, it is related to the Bolashak International Scholarship, which was set up in 1993, thanks to which thousands of Kazakhstan students have received and are getting higher education abroad or are able to continue their study for the Master's degree and PhD in leading universities of the world.

The president of the RK N.A.Nazarbaev in his speech at the jubilee forum of the International scholarship program «Bolashak» on November 29, 2013 mentioned the figures that over past years of Independence more than 10 thousand students received higher education abroad thanks to this program [1].

A great amount of work on internationalization of higher education is done at Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, one of the biggest higher educational institutions of the Republic. It has fully transferred into educational programs, which meet the requirements of international standards; the teaching staff actively lead scientific research and accomplish innovative projects jointly with foreign specialists. The number of scientific articles of scholars in publications with high impact factor and citation is increasing year by year. The University shows positive dynamics in the sphere of extension of international cooperation, academic mobility and the development of social partnership. Al-Farabi Kazakh National University pays particular attention to the implementation of joint scientific and educational projects and programs with foreign universities.

Methods

All of this determined the rapid promotion of Al-Farabi Kazakh National University in the world ranking and its entry into the top 300 universities in the world based on study of rating agency QS (the UK). The objective is to improve the position of Kazakh National University in the world ranking in the future, for that purpose it is crucial to increase the volume of Kazakh scientists' publications in leading international scientific journals, to introduce educational courses in English, to invite well-known foreign scholars to conduct lectures and research programs, also to promote the departure of Kazakhstan professors as invited experts in foreign universities.

Main body

It should be noted nevertheless that the tendency to realize teaching in English at universities might have a number of negative consequences, as it often leads to the decline of the role of academic process in other languages [2], including the mother tongue. Thus, in Kazakhstan there are mutually exclusive, at first sight, language peculiarities of internationalization of education which require a comment.

It is well-known that the Republic of Kazakhstan is a multi-ethnic, multicultural and multi-confessional state, where more than a hundred ethnic groups speaking languages relating to different genetic structural groups and classes reside. Historically, it

is accounted for many reasons, the main ones being famine in 1923-1933, which reduced the number of Kazakh population more than twice as less, massive deportation of the repressed peoples to Kazakhstan in the pre-World War II years: Germans, Ingush, Chechens, Koreans, Crimean Tatars, Greeks, Poles and others; evacuation of the population from the front areas to Kazakhstan during the WW II years; development of virgin and fallow lands. All of these historical events caused the increase of Russian speaking population in Kazakhstan. These processes turned the Kazakh population into an ethnic minority in their historic territory until the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Republic getting sovereignty¹.

All of these factors, as well as Russification policy led to the fact that during the Soviet period communicative language area of Kazakhstan, as well as of other Soviet republics, was dominated by the Russian language which had huge prestige for « language proficiency in Russian offered opportunities ... to receive all kinds of education and for any kind of career» [3,104]. Via the Russian language, people could be introduced to the world culture and they could practise interethnic communication. All this actually resulted in strengthening the position of the Russian language at the expense of others. [4, 309].

The Kazakh language, thus, was expelled out of the formal political and public arena.

Following the Kazakhstan gaining independence, one of the first acts adopted in 1989 was the Act «On Languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan», which established the status of the Kazakh language as the official language, Russian as a language of interethnic communication. The new version of the Act of 1997 defines the status of the Russian language as the language officially used on a par with the Kazakh language.

Since the beginning of reformation period in the country the largest migration processes have taken place, both external and internal, which dramatically affected the ethno-linguistic situation² [5]. A particu-

¹ According to the census of 1989 the Kazakhstan population number was 16.2 mln people, out of them 6496,900 – Kazakhs, 6062,000 – Russians, 946,900 – Germans, 876,000 – Ukrainians, 331,000 – Uzbeks, 320,700 – Tatars, 181,500 – Uighurs, 177,900 – Belorussians, 100,800 – Koreans, 89,000 – Azerbaijanis, 616,500 other ethnic groups

² At the beginning of 2012 the Kazakhstan population number was 16 675,400 people, out of them 64,55% – Kazakhs, 22,35% – Russians, 2,96% – Uzbeks, 1,88% – Ukrainians, 1,42% – Uighurs, 1,22% – Tatars, 1,08% – Germans, 0,62% – Koreans, 0,61% – Turks, 0,56% – Azerbaijanis, 0,38% – Belorussians, 0,35% – Dungans, 0,24% – Kurds, 0,24% – Tadjiks, 0,20% – Poles, 0,19% – Chechens, 0,10% – Bashkirs, 1,04% – other ethnic groups (the RK Agency 2012).

larly important role was played by external migration, which was linked, on the one hand, with a significant outflow of Russian-speaking population in the first years after the collapse of the Soviet Union. This emigration, though considerably diminished, but nevertheless, is still continuing. On the other hand, Kazakhstan has been receiving repatriate ethnic Kazakhs from the former Soviet Union countries and beyond. This process appreciably affects the ethno-demographic and linguistic situation in the country.

Thus, over the period of independence of Kazakhstan, due to the adopted legislation acts on the new language policy, the implementation of language planning, measures to carry out the National program of functioning and development of languages for 2001-2010, changes in the proportions of the major ethnic groups of population in the country, and the processes of civil and ethnic identification, and many others, major changes in the communicative language expanse of Kazakhstan have occurred [6].

It is important to note that the aim of the new national program of functioning and development of languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011-2020 is to increase the number of school leavers who have a good command of the official language up to 100 %, of the adult population of the Republic speaking it—up to 80 %. Simultaneously, the National program seeks to save the population number speaking Russian at the rate of 90%, and to increase the part of English-speaking population up to 20%. According to the cultural project of trilingualism, the portion of the population that speaks three languages—official, Russian and English—is planned to be increased to 20% by 2020. The achievement of these «target indices» [7] is directly connected with the system of continuous education of Kazakhstan

young generation in the state language, while teaching the Kazakh and Russian languages in all schools is compulsory.

Over the years of independence, the state Kazakh language has considerably expanded its functions and scope of use. Besides, in accordance with modern requirements, integration into the global community, as well as a phased implementation of the country's cultural project «The Trinity of Languages», the prestige of the English language has risen and it has enlarged its volume of functioning. However, the accumulated communicative power of the Russian language, which for a long period of history was the dominant means of inter-ethnic communication in the country, in its official and political life, educational sphere, continues to persist in the Kazakh society. Consequently, the internationalization of education in Kazakhstan is not so much teaching in the English language, which is rapidly developing, but has not yet received wide usage. The important role still belongs to the Russian language, which is most evident in the higher education system of the country.

The priority of the Russian language has persisted much longer particularly in the sphere of higher education than in schools and colleges of the country. And at present, against the background of a significant increase in the number of students choosing to study at university in the official language, and the increasing prioritization of studying in English in the educational sphere of Kazakhstan, the Russian language retains an important place.

It is interesting to analyze the dynamics of the distribution of the number of students by their language choice for studying at universities of Kazakhstan that clearly demonstrate the trends of change in the language preferences of students over the 20 years of sovereignty of the country (Table).

Table – The number of university students by language of instruction in the Republic of Kazakhstan

The academic year	Number of students (thousand people).	Education in Kazakh (%)	Education in Russian (%)	Education in other languages (%)
1990/1991	287,3	13,65	86,3	0,05
1991/1992	283,3	17,9	82,0	0,1
1994/1995	266,7	29,0	71,0	–
1995/1996	260,0	30,9	68,9	0,2
1996/1997	255,8	30,4	69,2	0,4
1997/1998	293,5	27,3	72,2	0,5

1998/1999	318,8	26,9	72,4	0,7
1999/2000	365,4	28,0	71,5	0,5
2000/2001	440,7	30,1	69,3	0,7
2001/2002	514,7	31,5	67,75	0,75
2002/2003	597,5	36,2	62,9	0,9
2003/2004	658,1	38,6	60,5	0,9
2004/2005	747,1	40,0	58,8	1,2
2005/2006	775,8	42,6	56,5	0,9
2006/2007	768,4	43,95	54,9	1,15
2007/2008	717,1	46,7	52,2	1,1
2008/2009	633,8	47,6	51,3	1,1
2009/2010	610,3	49,8	48,6	1,6
2010/2011	620,4	51,6	46,8	1,6
2011/2012 ¹	629,5	54,4	44,1	1,5

Important note: Information about the choice of the language of instruction by the young generation of Kazakhstan of different ethnic origins suggest that the representatives of the largest ethnic groups of the republic—the Kazakhs and Russians—mostly are taught in their ethnic languages, while the representatives of the numerous Kazakhstan Diaspora most often opt for Russian as the language of higher education. In addition, foreign students who generally come to Kazakhstan universities from Africa and Asia for higher education in the medical, agricultural and specific technical specialities are taught in Russian [8].

Returning to the issue of training young people in world languages, which contributes to the internationalization of education, it is necessary to emphasize the role of the cultural project «The Trinity of Languages» initiated by the President of the country who says: «Kazakhstan should be seen around the world as a highly educated country, whose population can use three languages. They are: Kazakh – the official language, Russian—the language of inter-ethnic communication and English—the language of successful integration into the global economy.»

Thus, laying a course for the citizens mastering three languages, Kazakhstan responds to the reality of today: the trinity of languages will be the indication of a country's competitiveness. The experts believe that the work on the development of the state language should be much deeper and more consistent. On the other hand, it is necessary to take

into account the key need to maintain the position of the Russian language. Everybody understands the role of the Russian language as the language of successful inter-ethnic cooperation and its integrative function. The Russian language plays a very considerable role in the information field of the republic, and the knowledge of it will remain a factor of personal competitiveness in the foreseeable future.

In addition, finally, the third component of the idea is related to the importance of learning the English language, which is necessary in a globalized world with its enormous flow of information and innovation. The idea of the trinity of languages, in fact, is a part of a national ideology aimed to the establishment and development of competitive Kazakhstan – so is the implementation of the cultural project «The Trinity of Languages» evaluated by the absolute majority of experts [9].

Conclusion

It should be concluded that Kazakhstan is consistently implementing the adopted state language policy, the effectiveness of which will largely depend on the ways of introduction of modern methods of teaching the young generation of Kazakhstan the state and foreign languages, especially English, as well as the preservation of the communicative functions of the Russian language, which will on the whole contribute to the successful development of the internationalization of education in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

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