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EDUCATING MULTILINGUAL YOUTH: FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

***Аннотация:** образование в эпоху глобальной взаимосвязанности требует свободного владения не только в одном, а в нескольких языках. Данная статья исследует аспекты современного образования многоязычной молодежи в обучении их иностранным языкам. По мнению авторов, преподаватели университетов, которые предоставляют языковую поддержку, должны соответствовать критериям межкультурного образования во владении иностранным языком. Наряду с этим, от всех преподавателей требуют подготовки, которая поможет студентам выучить иностранный язык путем внедрения культурного разнообразия в процесс изучения. Все больше и больше стран, включая Казахстан, предлагают английский как второй обязательный иностранный язык, переключая другие иностранные языки в области обязательных компонентов.*

***Ключевые слова:** образование, владение иностранным языком, многоязычная молодежь, межкультурная коммуникация.*

***Abstract:** education in the era of global interconnectedness requires being fluent not only in one but several languages. This article questions the phenomenal aspect of modern education for multilingual youth by teaching them foreign languages. University teachers who provide language support should have intercultural training and*

qualifications in foreign language acquisition that is aligned with the approaches implemented in practice. Alongside it is believed that all teachers require training to teach students without the language of instruction and to be able to value diversity by incorporating cultural diversity within their teaching. More and more countries, including Kazakhstan, are offering English as the second – compulsory – foreign language, and to shifting other foreign languages into the domain of compulsory options.

Keywords: *education, foreign language acquisition, multilingual youth, intercultural communication.*

Multilingualism characterizes multicultural societies all over the world, and Kazakhstan is no exception. The Central Asian country with more than 130 ethnic groups has demonstrated itself as a modern state that aims to integrate into a globalized community politically, economically and socially. Kazakhstan offered a phased implementation of the cultural project in order to ensure the competitiveness of the country and its citizens, «Trinity of languages», according to which we need to develop three languages: Kazakh as the state language, Russian as a language of international communication and English as the language of successful integration into the global economy [1]. Thus, educating young people is a crucial matter as long as the era of global interconnectedness requires being fluent not only in one but several languages.

The purposes and uses of foreign languages are as diverse as the students who study them. Some students study another language in hopes of finding a rewarding career in the international marketplace or government service. Others are interested in the intellectual challenge and cognitive benefits that accrue to those who master multiple languages. Still others seek greater understanding of other people and other cultures. Many approach foreign language study, as they do other courses, simply to fulfill a graduation requirement. Regardless of the reason for study, foreign languages have something to offer everyone. Through the study of other languages, students gain a knowledge and understanding of the cultures that use that language and, in fact, cannot truly master the language until they have also mastered the cultural contexts in which the language occurs.

The position of Russian in the Kazakh speech community has actually become comparable to that of a second language rather than a foreign language, since many people in Kazakhstan today use Russian on a daily basis in different contexts. This increasing use of Russian includes its substantial use for educational purposes, both in higher education and in secondary schools where instruction through the medium of Russian is becoming increasingly common. English is utilized widely both for undergraduate and graduate programs at the university. Higher education in Kazakhstan has undergone a tremendous transformation towards academic internationalization. This requires a different approach to teach students without the language of instruction and to be able to value diversity by incorporating cultural diversity within their teaching. More and more countries, including Kazakhstan, are offering English as the second – compulsory – foreign language, and to shifting other foreign languages into the domain of compulsory options. University teachers who provide language support should have intercultural training and qualifications in foreign language acquisition that is aligned with the approaches implemented in practice.

Research on teaching culture has shown that language and culture are closely related [2] and are best acquired together. Brown describes the interrelatedness of language and culture stating «that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture. The acquisition of a second language, except for specialized, instrumental acquisition, is also the acquisition of a second culture». Based on these findings, it is clear that language and culture learning are inextricably linked, but what role does culture play in language teaching and how is it being taught? Teachers spent the greatest amount of time and effort on teaching grammatical and lexical components of the language, leaving the culture as the weakest component in the curriculum. Strasheim [3] concluded earlier that teachers spent approximately 10% of teaching time on culture, whereas a study conducted 25 years later by Moore [4] found that at least 80% of the teachers surveyed indicated they were teaching culture more than half of their instructional time. Although teachers have begun to incorporate more culture in the lesson, the major concern that remains is finding effective ways for

integrating culture and language that prepare the learners to communicate and collaborate effectively in the 21st century.

Although there has been an extensive discussion on how to teach culture in a foreign language classroom, educators are still looking for effective techniques and approaches that allow language teachers in the 21st century to teach culture in ways that promote authentic communication [5]. Since language emerges from societal interactions, young learners cannot truly learn the language without acquiring knowledge about its culture and native speakers. Examining the aspects of foreign language acquisition, it is important to mention that speaking another language is equal to understanding another culture. As it has been previously discussed, language contains subjective views of the society and learning a language is learning perspectives of which the language is spoken. Therefore, teaching a foreign language is unique in a sense that teachers are not only teaching the content of subjects, but also teach words and the mechanics of the target language, introduce new concepts, and guide students how to think in a way that is appropriate in the target culture. That means that, in order to examine how people think and how people deliver their thoughts, learners must be able to think critically.

«It is of great importance to increase intercultural understanding in the world, and incorporating intercultural communicative competence in teacher training programs should be one of the first steps in this process. Making intercultural communication training an integral part of teacher education is probably one of the biggest challenges of our times, but if successful, it would have a beneficial multiplier effect in the field of education and beyond» [6]. Thus the role of the teacher becomes ever more important as they are the ones who intermediates all this knowledge. They will have to be able to select those specific cultural elements that are relevant in the context that specific foreign language is taught. Moreover, the increasing awareness of culture during foreign language classes should be emphasized, by pointing out the areas of discourse that may differ across cultures, or the preferred ways to communicate in that specific culture. As the countries become more connected with each other in terms of economy and politics, both governments and non-governmental organizations hire graduates

with foreign language ability skills. Being multilingual opens up diverse opportunities for employment and serves as the best information for the curriculum vitae.

Language policy issues related to educating multilingual youth are at the heart of many modern societies in the 21st century, where globalization has changed the linguistic ecology in many different ways. In Kazakhstan, the state policy is aimed at securing the multilingualism. That's why foreign language teachers have to become updated with the most recent technologies and methodologies in order to provide an effective background for students to learn foreign languages today. Besides, nowadays we can no longer speak about teaching language without culture. Thus, any foreign language teacher should take into account the fact that, besides linguistic knowledge, they should also be competent in giving students information about context, culture or intercultural communicative competence when it comes to foreign language teaching.

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