

The Principal Features of Tsovatush - Georgian Bilingualism

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Abstract. The paper deals with Tsovatush-Georgian language contact. One of the goals of the research was to define the major characteristics of Tsovatush-Georgian bilingualism, for which it was essential to state the level of Tsovatush language endangerment. The territory of the village and amount of population gave us an opportunity to organize the complete description of the population for sociolinguistic objectives and not to fulfill the research in the form of massive interviews and afterwards to generate it, which is greatly recognized in Sociology at the time of the researches in great geographic areas. It was revealed that the level of Tush language endangerment is serious – only grandparents' and elders' generation speak in this language. The research results are important from theoretical viewpoint. The observation showed us that not only the whole society undergoes the stages of bilingualism combining several generations, but maybe just one generation or one individual as well.

Keywords: Tsovatush Language, language Contact, Individual Bilingualism, Group Bilingualism, Societal Bilingualism.

1. Introduction

Our research is mainly based on the materials of fieldwork undertaken by us, which we managed to obtain in 2010-2012 years in Zemo Alvani. The expedition was implemented under three-year (2010-2012) project – “Auli Languages – Mental Forms of Mankind – in the Conditions of Globalization (According to the bilingual materials of Tsovatush-Georgian)”.

Tsovatush language is the member of Nakh group of Iberian-Caucasian family. The same language family includes Georgian language, which covers Kartvelian group together with Mingrelian, Chan and Svan languages. At present, the village Zemo Alvani located in Georgia is the only place in the whole world, where the population speaks in Tsovatush language. After settling Tsovatushs from the mountainous Tusheti into the valley (taking place in I part of XIX century), their language appeared under the direct influence of Kakhian speech, Chagmatush dialect and Georgian literary language. It appeared in the language area, where Georgian language had evidently obtained dominant rights (it still has even today). This area contained all the conditions for starting the shift of Tsovatush as the less prestigious language into Georgian one having high social status and accordingly, considerably large prestige. This process began so naturally and it still continues even nowadays, as it happened with the other analogical language contacts in any countries of the world.

2. Submitting

2.1. Methods

The territory of the village (divided into 9 main streets) gave us an opportunity to organize the complete description of the population for sociolinguistic objectives and not to fulfill the research in the form of massive interviews and afterwards to generate it, which is greatly recognized in Sociology at the time of the researches in great geographic areas.

We studied the level of knowledge of the language in Tsovatush population by taking into consideration the age groups. For the objectives of the research, we defined 4 categories of the age groups; each of them contains just one generation: Age of 60 and above – generation of great grandparents; from the age of 40 to 60 – generation of grandparents; from the age of 20 to 40 – generation of the parents; below the age of 20 –

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children and teenagers. It was found out that the level of knowledge of mother language is defined due to 5 criteria. They know the language: Very good; good; at an average level; they understand but can't speak; they don't know the language.

2.2. Discussion

Tsovatush-Georgian bilingualism has its own history. M. Mikeladze distinguishes 4 periods for development of the mentioned bilingualism: I period – before settling of Tsovatushs in the valley (before 1820); II period – from settling into the valley until establishing the soviet authority in Georgia (1820-1921); III period – from establishing the soviet regime to 80s (1921-1980); IV period – from 80s till present (1980-2008). The scientist describes sociolinguistic nature of Tsovatush-Georgian language relations. Due to the periods she estimates the degree and extent of influence of Georgian language on Tsovatush one. In I period Tsovatush had to be in relationship with the dialects of Georgian mountains, in II period – with the dialects of the valley, which was added Georgian literary language, in III and IV periods – with literary language, which was conditioned by the literate nature of the influence (Mikeladze 2008: 14-15).

Tush scholar Ivane Bukurauli foresaw an unenviable fortune of his mother language even at the end of XIX century: [Tsovatush] “becomes more and more tortured because of been influenced by Georgian language and by the peculiar time it will be totally terminated (Bukurauli 1897: 43).

Our research is mainly based on the materials of expedition undertaken by us, which we managed to obtain in 2010-2012 years in Zemo Alvani.

One of the goals of the research was to define the major characteristics of Tsovatush-Georgian bilingualism at the contemporary stage, for which it was essential to state the level of Tsovatush language endanger.

After the carried out research it was revealed that the level of Tush language endanger is serious – only the generation of grandparents and elders speak in the mentioned language. The generation of the parents still understands the language but they don't speak in this language with their children. The children don't study this language as their mother language. The age of speakers is just 40-45 years and above. Below the age of 40 the number of the persons who know the language is just 160 (we don't consider the average level of knowledge), amongst only one person knows the language very well, the level of others' knowledge is “Good”.

Mufwene notes that ecology of each case of language contact is unique. In spite of the similarities, the case taking place in one residence isn't repeated in another one (Mufwene 2002: 165).

According to the research by Stavanhagen, from five to eight thousand various ethnic groups live in almost 160 national states. Amongst the number of monolinguals or mono-ethnics is very low. Nearly all the nations have the groups of individuals, who live in the boundaries of it and use other languages as well together with their mother language in everyday life (Stavanhagen 1990).

As David Crystal informs us, speaking in two or more languages is natural for three-quarter of the humankind. He also notes, there is no an official statistics, but over 6000 languages co-exist in less than 200 countries. Multilingualism is an inevitable outcome of language contact. Due to the observation of the researcher, there is no totally monolingual country (Crystal 2007: 409-410).

Colin Baker and Sylvia Jones denote that almost two-third part of the world population is bilingual. Together with enhancement of globality of the world, bilingualism and monolingualism, language contacts and language study influence on nearly all the humans (Baker... 1998: vii). Nowadays there are a lot of definitions on bilingualism and bilingual (see Weinreich 1953: 5; Mackey 1970: 555; Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981: 81; Pousada 2008: 3-5; Bloomfield 1935: 55-56; Haugen 1969: 6-7; Macnamara 1969:82; Rivers 1969: 35-36; Oestricher 1974:9; Malmberg 1977: 133-136; Braun 1937: 115). The earlier researches on bilingualism were focused on the definition of the mentioned phenomenon due to the language competences.

From 1950-1960 the researchers paid attention to the question how the language was used and functioned by the bilingual speakers and in bilingual society. Weinreich and Haugen are considered as the initiators of these researches. Some of the definitions underline both sides of the language (see e.g. Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981: 91). We have emotional definitions as well (see e.g. Pousada 2008: 3). The

scientific literature focuses on dynamics of development of bilingualism as well as on its scales and nature. Accordingly, some more definitions were appeared for underlining any features and degree of bilingualism. For instance, Horizontal Bilingualism, Vertical Bilingualism, Diagonal Bilingualism, Passive Bilingualism, Active Bilingualism, Dominant Bilingualism and etc. The report studies main features of Tsovatush-Georgian Bilingualism according to dynamics and scales of its development.

In order to assess bilingualism it's always substantial to take into consideration the stage of the language contact and bilingualism itself in case of the language groups to be analyzed. Observation on the nature of Tsovatush-Georgian bilingualism showed us that the language relations should pass 5 stages from the point of dynamics of development: Monolingualism with the level of knowledge of the first language (the first stage for the language contact); Ascendant bilingualism; Equilingualism; Recessive bilingualism; Monolingualism with the level of knowledge of the second language (the last stage for the language contact).

In this periodization the dynamics for development of bilingualism is obvious as well: it passes 3 stages sequentially. These are the following: ascendant bilingualism, equilingualism and recessive bilingualism.

Therefore, we distinguish from each other the language contact and bilingualism at the time of periodization as monolingualism is characteristic for the language contact at the beginning and ending stages of development and herewith, monolingualism expels bilingualism.

An ascendant bilingualism sequentially passes the periods of individual and group bilingualism and reaches the societal bilingualism.

Beardsmore sees the connection between Individual Bilingualism and Social Bilingualism in the question by Fishman: Who speaks what language to whom and when? (Beardsmore 1986: 5).

Individual, group and social nature of bilingualism is its definition from the viewpoint of its scale. Societal bilingualism still doesn't mean equilingualism. Maybe, bilingualism is spread in the whole society, but bilinguals don't have the equal level of knowledge of both languages yet. A few times later, again in the conditions of societal bilingualism, when the level of knowledge of the second language becomes equal to the level of knowledge of the first (mother) language, we get equilingualism assuredly. Together with the term equibilingualism, the term "Balanced Bilingualism" is used (see Beardsmore 1986: 9).

Herewith, in the society bilinguals may differ from each other in their level of knowledge of the language. In case of some bilinguals we may deal with the equilingualism, in case of some bilinguals – we may have ascendant bilingualism and in some cases – recessive bilingualism. Ng Bee Chin and Gillian Wigglesworth use the term "passive bilinguals" instead of the term "recessive bilinguals" (Chin et al. 2007: 7).

Ascendant bilingualism is enclosed by the recessive monolingualism: quantity of bilinguals turns enhanced, but simultaneously the number of monolinguals becomes decreased.

From the point of scale, individual bilingualism is conformed to societal monolingualism with the level of knowledge of the first language. Societal bilingualism is in accordance with individual monolingualism with the level of knowledge of the second language. Equilingualism is the top of its development. Afterwards bilingualism turns to the way leading to monolingualism. Together with decreasing bilingualism, monolingualism is enhanced. The more quantity of bilinguals is decreased, the more number of monolinguals is increased.

In the conditions of its regress, bilingualism passes the same way, which it had passed at the time of ascendant, but with regress: it gradually passes the steps of group and individual bilingualism.

Group bilingualism is proportioned to group monolingualism.

In case of individual bilingualism we get societal monolingualism, but with the level of knowledge of the second language unlike societal monolingualism conformed to the individual bilingualism confirmed at the beginning stage of ascendant bilingualism, which is characterized by the level of knowledge of the first language.

After defeat of bilingualism, monolingualism is the winner. This is the fatal outcome of language contact, when the second language totally shifts to the first one or it dies.

Tsovatush-Georgian language contact has passed the following three stages from the point of dynamics of development: Monolingualism with the level of knowledge of Tsovatush language; Ascendant bilingualism; Equilingualism.

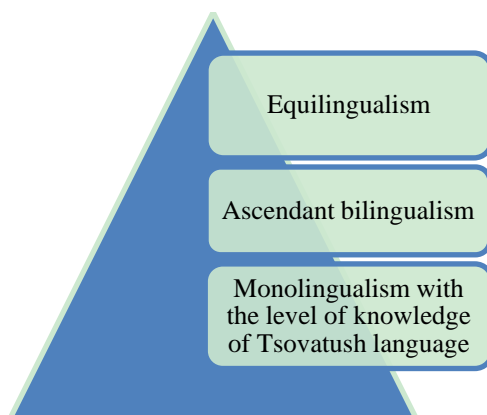


Fig. 1: three stages of development of Tsovatush-Georgian language contact.

Those three stages are already the past for the relations between the given two languages to be analyzed. Two more stages should be passed in the language relations between Tsovatush and Georgian ones: IV – Recessive bilingualism and V – Monolingualism with the level of knowledge of Georgian language. At the contemporary level, Tsovatush-Georgian bilingualism is on the way of regress, which means bilingualism tends to be turned into monolingualism successively but towards the second language – Georgian.

Nowadays, Tsovatush bilinguals know Georgian language better than Tsovatush one, but the generations of children and teenagers are monolinguals.

F. Grosjean notes out, that the majority of bilinguals “acquired their languages at various times during their lives and are rarely equally fluent in them “ (Grosjean, 1994).

It becomes obvious, that from the point of dynamics of development of Tsovatush-Georgian language contact, Tsovatush-Georgian bilingualism covers two stages of development: Ascendant bilingualism and Equilingualism.

Here, just III stage should be taken as well – recessive bilingualism, which is being passed by Tsovatush-Georgian bilingualism at this period.

From the point of extent, Tsovatush-Georgian bilingualism has undergone the following stages:
Individual bilingualism; Group bilingualism; societal bilingualism.

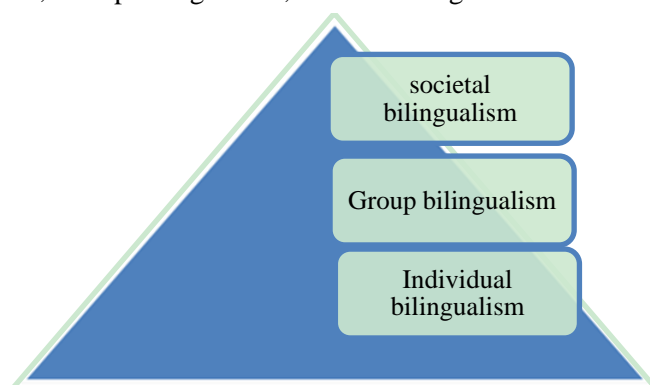


Fig. 2: three stages of development of Tsovatush-Georgian bilingualism From the point of extent.

These three stages are already the past as well. In its tend, societal bilingualism contained two stages of development: with better level of knowledge of Tsovatush language and with better level of knowledge of Georgian one. As bilingualism, the subject of our interest is regressive at the modern stage, we may meet another stage concerning group bilingualism in the history of its development alluding that the whole society doesn't know Tsovatush and just separate groups, namely the old people can speak in the mentioned language.

3. Conclusion

Thus, the level of Tush language endanger is serious – only the generation of grandparents and elders speak in the mentioned language. At the contemporary level, Tsovatush-Georgian bilingualism tends to be turned into monolingualism successively but towards the second language – Georgian. Nowadays, Tsovatush bilinguals know Georgian language better than Tsovatush one, but the generations of children and teenagers are monolinguals. In both age groups language contact is on different levels: it is ended in the group of younger generation, here the last stage of monolingualism is taking place with the level of knowledge of the second language – Georgian one, which is already the first language for Tsovatushs. In the group of elder generation we see the stage of recessive bilingualism – Tsovatushs of the mentioned age know the second language better than the mother tongue.

From the point of extent, Tsovatush-Georgian bilingualism has undergone individual bilingualism, group bilingualism and societal bilingualism. As bilingualism, the subject of our interest is regressive at the modern stage, we may meet another stage concerning group bilingualism in the history of its development alluding that the whole society doesn't know Tsovatush and just separate groups, namely the old people can speak in the mentioned language.

The present generation of Tsovatush great grandparents had to live in those conditions of bilingualism, when they have passed the stage of bilingualism with better level of knowledge of Tsovatush language and nowadays they are bilinguals with better level of knowledge of Georgian language.

Thus, when they talk about the meaning of bilingualism and bilinguals, the level of knowledge of the second language in order to regard the person bilingual and so on, we think in this case the researchers don't take into consideration the stages of development of bilingualism. Correspondingly, on different steps of development of language contact and bilingualism, bilinguals with different language skills are placed. Thus, nature of bilingual is defined by the stages of development of language contact and bilingualism.

The research results are important from theoretical viewpoint. The observation showed us, that not only the whole society undergoes the stages of bilingualism combining several generations, but maybe just one generation or one individual as well. The person is on different steps of bilingualism on different stages of the own linguistic biography. It's really legal in the case of language contact, especially in the conditions of accelerated bilingualism.

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