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PECULIARITIES OF LANGUAGE CHOICE IN UKRAINE

У статті розглядається двомовність в Україні. Теоретичною основою дослідження є поняття “домену”, запропоноване Дж. Фішманом (1972), згідно з яким у багатомовному суспільстві різне оточення (ситуація) передбачає використання різних мов. Наше дослідження підтверджує те, що вибір мови, певною мірою, залежить від оточення (ситуації), а результати всеукраїнського соціологічного опитування, проведеного Інститутом соціології НАН України у жовтні 2006 року та травні 2007 року дають підстави говорити про диглосію в Україні.

Ключові слова: двомовність, диглосія, багатомовність, вибір мови, домен.

В данной статье рассматривается двуязычие в Украине. Теоретической основой исследования является понятие “домена”, предложенное Дж. Фишманом (1972), согласно которому в многоязычном обществе окружающая обстановка (или ситуация) предполагает использование разных языков. Наше исследование подтверждает то, что выбор языка, в определенной степени, зависит от окружающей обстановки (ситуации), а результаты всеукраинского социологического опроса, проведенного Институтом социологии НАН Украины в октябре 2006 года и мае 2007 года дают основания говорить о диглоссии в Украине.

Ключевые слова: двуязычие, диглоссия, многоязычие, выбор языка, домен.

The present article focuses on the study of bilingualism in Ukraine. The theoretical underpinning is the notion of “domain” introduced by J. Fishman (1972) stressing that different settings characteristically call for the use of different languages in a multilingual society. The present research confirms that the choice of a language to a certain degree depends on the particular settings and, based on the results of an All-Ukrainian sociological survey, conducted by the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine in October 2006 and May 2007, suggests there is a case of diglossia in Ukraine.

Key words: bilingualism, diglossia, multilingualism, language choice, domain.

J. Fishman (1965) in his seminal article “The relationship between micro– and macro-sociolinguistics in the study of who speaks what language to whom and when” mentions the following example. Two Brussels officials speak to each other French in their office, Dutch at the club and their native Flemish dialect at home [4, p. 244-268]. The fact that two persons usually talking to each other in one language, switch to another language under different circumstances poses the question: what does the language choice depend on?

Modern societies are becoming increasingly bilingual, and more generally, multilingual. Bilingual and multilingual speakers outnumber monolingual speakers in the world’s population [7]. The world’s estimated 5,000 languages are spoken in the world’s 200 sovereign states, so that communication among the citizens of many countries clearly requires extensive bi– (if not multi-)lingualism. David Crystal (2003) estimates that two-thirds of the world’s children grow up in a bilingual environment [2]. Considering only bilingualism involving English, the statistics that D. Crystal has gathered indicates that, of the approximately 570 million people who speak English world-wide, over 41 percent or 235 million are bilingual in English and some other language.... “So, far from being exceptional, as many people might believe, bilingualism/multilingualism, which goes hand in hand with multiculturalism, is currently the rule throughout the world and will become increasingly so in the future.” [1, p. 2].

Bilingualism is traditionally defined as either 1) the ability to speak two languages, 2) the frequent use (as by a community) of two languages, or 3) the political or institutional recognition of two languages [6].

A notion closely related to bilingualism is that of diglossia defined by Charles Ferguson (1959) as following: “diglossia is a relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language (which may include a standard or regional standards), there is a very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more complex) superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature, either of an earlier period or in another speech community, which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any section of the community for ordinary conversation” [3, p. 229]. In such interpretation, diglossia may be seen as a kind of bilingualism in a society in which one of the languages has high prestige (often referred to as “high”), and another language has low prestige (“low”).

Studies on bilingualism are predominantly conducted based on languages, one of which is English (J. F. Hamers and M. H.A. Blanc “Bilinguality and Bilingualism” (2003), L. Greenfiel “Situational measures of normative language view in relation to person, place, and topic among Puerto Rican bilinguals” (1972), T. K. Bhatia and W. C. Ritchie “The Handbook of Bilingualism” (2006).

The present research focuses on Russian/Ukrainian language choice shedding light on the issue of bilingualism in Ukraine. There is a significant difference in the language people use depending on the regions of Ukraine they live in. However, for the present purpose, we will not discuss regional language preferences, leaving it for a further research. The emphasis, instead, will be on the reasons standing behind the particular language choice in Ukraine.

Language issues, particularly the status of Russian and other minority languages are extremely politicized in Ukraine. Researches, hence, tend to be partial, while data are often unreliable. Upon a thorough analysis of, otherwise, abundant

research centers, many of them working mainly for certain political parties and publishing desirable data before elections, there were singled out several sociological institutions whose data are considered to be reliable in Ukraine. Among them is the Ukrainian centre for economic and political studies named after Olexandr Razumkov and the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, whose surveys will be used in the present paper.

In our attempt to find the explanations of the reasons standing behind the choice of a language in a particular communicative situation we will make use of the sociological approach. It was advanced by J. Fishman (1972) who introduced the notion of "domain" stressing that different settings characteristically call for the use of different languages in a multilingual society (or varieties of the same language in a monolingual society). At one level a domain is a concrete setting like home, street, a classroom, a shop, an university, a religious institution, media etc. However, the choice of one language over another is not the physical setting alone, but the general activity ("event") conventionally associated with the setting. So, "church" stands for the range of activities associated with religion. In some societies this domain calls for a switch to another language (Latin, Sanskrit, Hebrew, etc.). In all religious societies the domain calls for a formal, "high" and somewhat archaic variety of language. Other broad domains would commonly be home, school, work, sport and recreation; and each has distinct linguistic correlates.

One of the first field researches studying domains was carried out by L. Greenfield [5]. The respondents (New York Puerto-Ricans) were asked questions like: "Imagine, you discuss some family issues with your parents. Where? (at home, in the seaside, at the school, in your office); "Imagine, you talk to your friends" etc. The respondents were asked to define the language they would be talking in each of these situations (1 – Spanish, 2 – Spanish rather than English, 3 – Spanish or English, 4 – English rather than Spanish, 5 – English). The results revealed that Spanish is predominantly used in "intimate" domains. In other words, among New York Puerto-Ricans there is a case of diglossia, whereas English has a "high", while Spanish "low" status.

There are similar researches conducted in other countries covering other languages, but more often than not, one of the languages is English: French and English in Quebec, Spanish and English in Miami, Hindi and English in India, Welsh and English in Wales.

In Ukraine a vast majority of people are bilingual. According to a sociological survey, conducted by Razumkov Center in 2002 in Ukraine, 94.1% of respondents state they are proficient in Russian and 91% are proficient in Ukrainian [9].

The sociological survey conducted in Ukraine by the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine in October 2006 and May 2007 revealed the following: the language, used for communication **at home** is Ukrainian (31.5% in October 2006 and 28.8% in May 2007), mostly Ukrainian (12.2% in October 2006 and 8.7% in May 2007), Russian (32.7% in October 2006 and 28% in May 2007), and mostly Russian (14.5% in October 2006 and 14.3% in May 2007) [8].

According to the same survey, **in public** (public places like street, shops, stores, etc.) people speak Ukrainian (26.3% as of October 2006 and 24.1% as of May 2007), mostly Ukrainian (13.1% as of October 2006 and 11.7% as of May 2007), Russian (33.5% as of October 2006 and 30.7% as of May 2007) and mostly Russian (14.7% as of October 2006 and 15.6% as of May 2007).

Furthermore, the same survey says that in **offices, schools and institutions of higher education** people speak Ukrainian (25.7% as of October 2006 and 22.3% as of April 2007), mostly Ukrainian (12% as of October 2006 and 12.1% as of April 2007), Russian (35.4% as of October 2006 and 30.2% as of April 2007) and mostly Russian (14.6% as of October 2006 and 17.8% as of April 2007).

The same research also suggests that people in Ukraine think in the following languages: Ukrainian (29%), mostly Ukrainian (8.6%), Russian (35%) and mostly Russian (10.7%).

Based on the results of this research, it can be suggested that in the case of bilingual Ukrainians there is a tendency to speak more Ukrainian at home (31.5% and 28.8%) than in offices, schools and institutions of higher education (25.7% and 22.3%). Conversely, Russian is preferred in offices, schools and institutions of higher education (35.4% and 30.2%) and is less spoken at home (32.7% and 28%). If that is true, Ukrainian has a "low" status in Ukraine, while Russian has a "high" status.

The analysis of the language choice in Ukraine reveals one more phenomenon. The same survey conducted in 2006-2007 [8, p. 42] shows that Russian is mostly spoken in public in the capital of Ukraine and cities (38,4%), as well as in towns (44.8%), (compare: in Kyiv and cities only 14.8% of respondents speak Ukrainian, in towns – 19.2%), while Ukrainian is mostly spoken only in villages (45.2%).

The survey further shows that 47.6% of people who think only in Ukrainian or mostly in Ukrainian have elementary education or have not completed their secondary education, and only 32.2% of those people have higher education, while 32.5% of people who think only in Russian or mostly in Russian have elementary or have not completed their secondary education, and 53.7% of those respondents have higher education [8, p. 49]. Based on these results of the 2007 survey, it can be therefore claimed that Russian is the language that people who have higher and secondary education more often think in, while more people who have elementary or have not completed their secondary education think in Ukrainian.

Thus, there can be traced a tendency in Ukraine to speak more Ukrainian at home than in offices, schools and institutions of higher education, while Russian is more often preferred in offices, schools and institutions of higher education and less spoken at home. Our research, therefore, suggests that in spite of its official language status, the Ukrainian language has a "low" status, while the Russian language – "high" status in Ukraine. One more evidence in favor of that statement is that Russian dominates in the capital, cities and towns, whereas Ukrainian – only in villages. A promising further research would deal with language choice in different regions of Ukraine and the dynamics of the language choice in Ukraine.

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