LANGUAGE AS CULTURE

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У статті досліджуються питання взаємозв'язку та взаємовпливу мови та культури; мова розглядається як соціокультурний феномен.

The questions of mutual connections and influence between language and culture are depicted in the article. Language is described as socio-cultural fenomemon.

Культура живет и развивается в "языковой оболочке". Язык обслуживает культуру, но не определяет ее; это то, что лежит в бытии человека в культуре. По меткому определению М. Хайдеггера язык – "дом бытия", где обитает человек. Культура – это инобытие человеческого духа, представленное в знаках. Она не только соединяет, но и разъединяет внутренний и внешний мир человека. Язык как лингвокультурологический феномен впитывает в себя все богатство культуры, в то же время как любая национальная культура в немалой степени связана с характером и спецификой конкретного языка. Язык играет важнейшую роль в плане интернационализации культур, глобализациимежкультурной коммуникации, диалога культур на основе лексико-семантического взаимоперевода. Соприкосновение разных культур находит отражение в языке в виде лексических заимствований. Вместе с тем язык представляет собой целый мир, способный лексически и семантически охватить всю многогранную культуру, все многосложное общество.

Язык как социокультурный фактор, который в значительной мере способствует формированию и организации опыта людей. Он, как и вся культура в целом, вырабатывает лишь общепринятые значения. Коммуникация возможна только лишь при наличии значений, которые принимаются, используются ее участниками и понятны им. Но такое наличие общепринятых значений допустимо, как правило, в пределах одного языка. Здесь в философско-социологическом плане очерчивается очень важная функция языка – функция идентификации людей в рамках той иной социальной группы, этнической общности. Язык и культура – сложные и многогранные явления, имеющие коммуникативно-деятельностную, ценностную и символическую природу. Язык не просто называет то, что есть в культуре, не просто выражает ее, формирует культуру, как бы прорастая в нее, но и сам развивается в культуре. Культура формирует сложную и многообразную языковую систему, благодаря которой происходит накопление и передача человеческого опыта из поколения в поколение.

> *"We are not simply bearers of cultures, languages and histories, with a duty to reproduce them. We are the products of linguistic-cultural circumstances, actors with a capacity to resynthesize what we have been socialized into and to solve new and emerging problems of existence."*
> *Mary Kalantzis*

The term "culture" can be problematic because it can mean different things to different people in different context. For some people culture is identified with art: theatre, movies, etc; sometimes it is used as if it pertains only to those with formal education and privileged social status. Culture cannot be reduced to holidays, foods, or dances, although these are, of course, elements of culture. Culture as a philosophical phenomenon is complex and intricate; it includes content, or product (the what of culture), process (how it is created and transformed), and the agents of culture (who is responsible for creating and changing it). So far culture can be defined as the ever-changing values, traditions, social and political relationships, and world outlook created, shared and transformed by a group of people bound together by a combination of factors that can be include common history, geographic location, language, social class, religion. Culture does not exist outside of human beings. That means that culture is not static relic, stagnant behavior or sterile value. In this respect we could say that, culture is rather verb then noun [1: 78], this definition reveals the very essence of culture-it is active, changing, always on the move, dynamic. Even within their native contexts, cultures are always changing as a result of political, social and other modifications in the immediate environment. The popular conception of cultural change is that it is much like a transfusion: as one culture is emptied out of a person, a new one is poured in. In this conception, each culture is inert

and permanent, and human beings do not influence the process to any significant degree. But at the same time, cultural values expressed in ethnical traditional values and identities reveals the character of stability; they are preserved to some extent for many generations.

In some ways we can think of culture as having both surface and deep structure, to borrow a concept from linguistics [3: 139]. Regardless of ethnic, or linguistic background, or time in Georgia, usually intimately connected to a shared urban culture and social layer, the youths often expressed strikingly similar tastes in music, food, clothes, television viewing habits, etc. At the same time most of them reflected deep aspects of their own ethnic culture such as respect for elders, a profound kinship with and devotion to family, and a desire to uphold important tradition such as staying with family rather than going out with friends on important holidays.

Just as there are no such things as "pure race", there is likewise no "pure culture". That is, cultures influence each other, and even minority cultures and those with less status have an impact on majority cultures. The view of culture as dynamic rather than fixed is unquestionably more befitting a conception of multicultural education.

Culture is multifaceted. Closely related to the dynamic nature of culture is that cultural identification are multiple, eclectic, mixed, and heterogeneous. This means, for one thing, that culture cannot be conflated with just ethnicity or race. As an example, Kurdish (The **Kurds** are an Ethnic-Iranian ethnolinguistic group mostly inhabiting in East part of Georgia) culture may be familiar to Georgians because it concerns an identity based primarily on ethnicity, the best-known site of culture. But one can also speak, for instance, of a Judaism culture because as a group, Judaists share a history and identity, along with particular social and political relationships. Thus one could be culturally Kurd and Judaist at the same time. But having multiple cultural identities does not imply that each identity is claimed or manifested equally. A wealthy light-skinned Kurd Judaist and a working class dark-skinned Kurd Judaist may have little in common other than their ethnic heritage and religion orientation, and the oppression that comes along their identities. People create their identities in different ways: while on Kurd Judaist may identify himself first and foremost ethnically, another may identify himself as a Judaist, a third as both, and fourth primarily as a member of the working class.

As culture is not simply ethnicity, even among specific cultural groups there are many and often conflicting cultural identities. Time of arrival in Georgia, language use level of education, family dynamics, place of residence, religion, and many other differences within groups may influence how one interprets or "lives" a culture. Further, the intersection of ethnicity and social class, or what M. Gordon termed ethclass [4: 11], is a key factor in defining culture.

Another important aspect of identity has to do with how interactions with people of other cultural groups may influence culture and identity. This is certainly the case in urban areas, where the identities of young people of many diverse ethnic and radical backgrounds defy easy categorization. The multiple identities of youths have important and far reaching implications for the development and implementations that focus just on specific ethnic groupings fail to capture the realities of many urban youths who live with complicated and heterogeneous realities. Culture is embedded in context. It means that the environment in which it exists influences culture. The culture of Georgian students in Georgia is of necessity different from that of Georgian immigrant students in the USA, or in Germany and Russia. When culture is presented to the students as if it were context-free, they lead to think of it as quite separate from the lives that people lead every day. Culture is commonly decontextualized. That reveals itself mostly in media images.

Culture is bound to a particular context, it is greatly influenced by the political, historical, and economic conditions in which it is found. It exists not in isolation but though concrete relationships characterized by differential access to power. As a result, dominant social groups in a society often determine what counts as culture. This is why, for example, a dominant cultural group unabashedly can designate itself as "the norm" and others as "culturally deprived" [6: 89-80]. Those who are so designated may not necessarily see themselves in this way, but naming by others takes on great power; eventually many oh those who are designated as "culturally deprived" may learn to believe it. Yet "culturally deprived" actually means simply that the group in question does not share in the culture – and consequently in the power – of the dominant group. The paradox of this stance it that while Christians see themselves as culturally neutral or "cultureless", at the same time they insist,

though constant messages in the dominant ideology, that theirs is the valued and valuable culture. To our mind theory of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (2) is significant here. According to him, it is not simply money, or economic capital, that determines one's standing in the social structure; equally important are what he has termed social capital and cultural capital. Social capital is made up of social obligations and networks that are convertible into economic capital. Cultural capital can be defined as the acquired tastes, values, language, and dialects, of the educational qualifications, that mark a person as belonging to a privileged social and cultural class. Just as in the case of learning one's native culture and language, cultural capital is acquired in the absence of any deliberate or explicit learned. The initial accumulation of cultural capital, in the words of Bourdieu is "the best hidden form of hereditary transmission of capital" [2: 246].

In essence, then, culture is deeply entangled with economic and political privilege. That is, the tastes, values, languages, and dialects that have the greatest status are associated with the dominant social class not because these tastes, values, languages, or dialects are inherently better but because they have higher social prestige as determined by the group with the greatest power. As a case in point, for many years linguists have proposed that Black English is a rich and creative variety of English, as logical and appropriate as standard English conventional wisdom still common among teachers is that Black English is simply "bad English".(see e.g.9)

Culture is Created and Social Constructed as discussed previously, culture often is thought of as a product – in – place, and as something handed down that must be kept the way it is. Not only does this result in a static view of culture, but it also implies that culture is already finished.So, culture is constantly evolving, and the reason that it evolves is because human beings change it. The action of people on culture takes place in big ways and small, by everyday people and by those who have power.

Culture is what we do every day. Culture change as a result of the decisions that we, as cultural agents, make about our traditions, attitudes, behaviors, and values. Were it not so, we would forever be mere pawns or victims of the actions of others. Sometimes, of course, cultural values develop as a result of victimization. The previous example of short – grained rice is a case in point. But even here, people took what they were given and made it a positive value. Without such valuing, short-grained rice would not have become part of the culture. The cuisine of poor people throughout the world is another illustration of how culture is created. Poor people often get nothing but leftovers, the parts of animals or plants that nobody else wants. What they have done with these remains has sometimes been nothing short of extraordinary. This is cultural creation in action. Put another way, in the words of Ericson "Culture can be thought of as a construction – it constructs us and we construct it" [8: 39]. Culture, then, is not a passive legacy, but an active operation that takes place though contact and interations with others. Culture is a social construction because it cannot exist outside of social contact and collaboration.

Closely related to the fact that culture is created and socially constructed is the fact that it is learned. That is, culture is not handed down though our genes, not is it inherited. This is very clear to see, for example, when children from a particular ethnic group (for instance, Russians), are adopted by families from another ethnic group (usually Georgian). Although the children may still be considered ethnically and raciallyRussian, they will in all likelihood be culturally Georgian, unless their parents made a conscious and determined effort to teach them the culture and history of their heritage while raising them, the children themselves later decide to do so.

Culture, especially ethnic and religious culture, is learned though interaction with families and communities. It usually is not consciously taught, or consciously learned. That is why it seems so natural and effortless. Although this process does not hold true of all cultures – for example, deaf or gay culture – we predictable learn culture while sitting on our mothers or grandmothers laps, standing by our fathers, listening to the conversations of family members around us, and modeling our behavior on theirs. In fact, most people do not even think about their culture unless it is in a subordinate position to another culture or – it no longer part of the cultural norm. That culture is learned is also apparent in the very concept of biculturalism. Bilingual education, for instance, very often is called bilingual/bicultural education. Because it is based on the principle that one can learn two languages and two cultural systems in order to function and even to succeed in different linguistic and cultural contexts.

Culture often is thought of as a seamless web on interrelated and mutually supportive values and behaviors, yet nothing could be further from the truth. Because they are complex systems that are created by people and influenced by social, economic, and political factors, cultures are also dialectical, conflicted, and full of inherent tensions. A culture is neither "good" not "bad" in general, but rather embodies values that have grown out of historical and social conditions and necessities. As individuals, we may find elements of our own or others' cultures uplifting or repugnant. That culture is dialectical does not mean that we need to embrace all of its contradictory manifestations in order to be "authentic" members of the culture.

That culture is dialectical also leads to an awareness that there is no special virtue in preserving particular elements of culture as if they existed outside of social, political, and historical spaces. Mary Kalantzis [5] has described this contradiction eloquently: "Preserving "communities" is not a good for its own sake, as if peoples should be preserved as museum pieces, so that they are not lost to posterity. "Communities" are always mixed, contradictory, conflict-ridden and by no means socially isolated entities. Active cultural re-creation, if people so wish, might involve consciously dropping one language in preference for another on abandoning some cultural tradition or other – such as sexism"[5: 12]. Sociologist Rafael Ramirez has suggested that we can think of every culture as a count that has two contradictory faces or subsystems. He calls these the culture of survival and the culture of liberation, and each is important in defining the complexity of culture. The culture of survival embodies those attitudes, values, traditions, and behaviors that are developed in response to political, economic, or social forces, some of them may be interpreted as a threat to the survival of the culture in some way. They can either limit, or expand people's perspectives within a particular culture. In the case of the role of women, values and behaviors of both males and females grew out of the necessity to view women, because of their unique biology, as primary caregivers. The need to survive is thus manifested in many cultures in perfectly understandable, although not always ethnical or equitable ways, given the history of the species. "The culture of survival is characterized mainly by the contradiction that it sustains, affirms, and provides, certain power but, at the time, does not confront or alter the oppressive elements and institutions nor affect the structure of political and economic power that controls the system." [7: 86] Ramirez has defined the culture of liberation as the values, attitudes, traditions, and behaviors that embody liberatory aspect of culture. This face of culture, according to Ramirez, is part of the process of decolonization, and of questioning unjust structures and values, and it "comprises those elements that promote a new social order in which the democratization of the sociopolitical institutions, economic equality and cooperation and solidarity in interpersonal relations predominate" [7: 88]. In this way, Ramirez says, authoritarism is contrasted with democracy, racism with consciousness of racial and ethnic identity, and sexism with gender equality. Human rights that are generally accepted by most societies can be included in the framework of the culture of liberation. As we shall see later, understanding the contradictory nature of culture is important if students and teachers are to develop a critical, instead of a romantic, perspective of etheir own and other people's cultures. Culture lives and developes in the "language farme" [12: 192] and language is a house of being. A language is deeply implicated with culture and an important part of it. That is, the language, language variety, or dialect one speaks is culture made manifest, although it is not, of course, all there is to culture. This explains why, for instance, so many assimilationist movements both inside and outside of schools have had native language devaluation and eliminations as major themes. In a very real sense, language is power, and this truth has been at the core of such movements. A major dimension of the power of language is the power to define, to decide the nature of lived experience. Doing away with a language, or prohibiting its use, tears away at the soul of a people. Consequently, it is not surprising that language often has served as a powerful symbol and organizing tool for language-minority groups. For instance, using the example of four indigenous minority cultures (Navajo, Huala Pai, Maori, and Hawaiian), Carlos Ovando and Karen Ground have shown how language maintenance and revitalization movements have been used by marginalized groups as major vehicls to attain power within society, to create a sense of peoplehood, and to challenge officially sanctioned structures and languages.

If research were to prove that maintaining native language use was a detriment to learning, there might be some reason to consider assimilation as a positive process. This has not proven to be the case, however.

There is even some evidence to support the hypothesis that speaking only one language e.g. English may act as a barrier to academic success for bicultural students. Research by David Adams and his colleagues examining the predicative value of English proficiency, Spanish proficiency, and the use of each at home relative to the academic achievement of Latino students in five cities, found that recent immigrants who were more fluent in Spanish performed better than did second – or third – generation Latinos. They also found a small but negative influence of English – language proficiency on the academic performance of the Mexican American students in the sample; that is, better English proficiency meant lower academic performance among Mexican American youths. How to analyze this finding? The researchers conjectured that there might be what they called a "counterforce" against the traditional relationship between English profiociency and academic performance. They continued, "This conterforce may very well be the peer pressure students experience which works against school achievement, in spite of the students, English – language proficiency" [11: 11-12].

This research confirms that simply speaking English is not guarantee that academic success will follow. There seem to be several reasons for this. First, when children are able to keep up with their native language at home, they develop metalinguistic awareness, that is, a greater understanding of how language itself works, and of how to use language for further learning, Some researchers e.g.Virginia Collier has suggested that practicing one language at home among students who are more proficient in another language actually can slow down cognitive development because it is only when parents and their children speak the language that know best that they are working at their level of cognitive maturity. Furthermore, given the negative attitudes that we have seen among teachers about languages and language varieties other than standard language, and especially about languages they consider to have a low status, children who speak these languages may become further alienated from school and what it represents. In essence, students may disidentify with school.

There are many examples that provide evidence that home cultures and native languages get in the way of learning not because of the nature of the home cultures or native languages themselves, but rather because they do not conform to the way that schools define languages. On the other hand, this cultural mismatch is not inevitable. There are numerous examples of research that has concluded that culture and language can work in a mutual and collaborative manner. The society need to accommodate to cultural and linguistic differences. Maintaining their language and culture is a far healthier response, than adopting an oppositional identity .

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ВІДОМОСТІ ПРО АВТОРА

Анастасія Закаріадзе – доктор філологічних наук, професор, голова комісії з питань якості знань факультету гуманітарних наук Тбіліського державного університету імені Іване Явакішвілі.
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