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STATE LANGUAGE AND BILINGUAL EDUCATION IN GEORGIA

Abstract

This paper discusses the significant role of multilingual education, mastery of the state language for civic integration, and, at the same time, the preservation and development of one's own identity. Multilingual education policy is part of the state policy, which aims to establish a common language of communication within the country, with language proficiency serving as a guarantee for effective civic integration in society. Bilingual education is a tool designed to ensure equal opportunities for participation and professional success for all.

Keywords: Bilingual Education, multilingual, state language.

Introduction

The state language is the primary language used in state institutions, administration, legal proceedings, and other official structures and relations. The status of the state language is usually defined by a country's constitution.

It is the language that performs an integrative function within a given state, in political, social, and cultural spheres. The "state language" is the language that has been granted such status by a country's constitution or, in the absence of a constitution, by the state's laws. This is the language citizens use when interacting with state authorities (legislative, judicial, and executive). The state language, recognized throughout the entire territory of the country, should be distinguished from the languages of national minorities, which may have the status of a state (official) language in a particular region.

Georgia is a multiethnic and multicultural country. Differences in ethnic origin give rise to linguistic, religious, and cultural diversity. The culture and traditions of ethnic groups are inherently valuable and worthy of respect, yet everyday life requires integration with the national majority.

In the process of social integration, the formation of tolerance between cultures plays an important role, along with respect for shared values and the avoidance of conflict situations. Intercultural education is the most effective mechanism for promoting civic integration.

Given Georgia's ethnic composition, civic integration is a particularly pressing issue. In recent years, the importance of intercultural education has grown significantly, and the state supports this initiative, as reflected in the constitution.

Literature Review – Discussion

Bilingualism – the ability to use two languages – is considered an essential aspect of education. Language is a system of signs perceived through hearing, sight, or other senses. Therefore, the range of language proficiency can vary from no knowledge of spoken or written words to fluent oral and written communication. The term "bilingualism" has various definitions; in some cases, it refers to a person who possesses only one skill (writing, reading, listening, or speaking) in the second language, even at a minimal level.

Contemporary research on bilingualism often focuses on the relationship between bilingualism and cognitive functions – for example, general intelligence and language skills such as verbal and non-verbal IQ, divergent thinking, academic achievement, and metalinguistic awareness.

Numerous international studies indicate the advantages of bilingualism in developing linguistic skills. Some research highlights its importance in fostering creative and divergent thinking, enhancing analytical abilities, improving the structure of language and perception, and strengthening the capacity to respond appropriately to feedback.

Bilingual (two-language) education is a form of education in which two or more languages (multilingual) are used as the medium of instruction for various subjects or subject groups. Studying in multiple languages simultaneously fosters linguistic skills and enables effective language use.

Several other studies confirm that:

1. Bilingualism promotes the development of analytical thinking and metalinguistic awareness.
2. Bilingual children are better able to determine the semantic meaning of words and use them compared to monolingual peers.

In this model of bilingual education, minority and majority languages are used alternately. Minority-language students begin schooling in their mother tongue, with the majority language initially taught only as a subject. The ultimate goal of the program is full bilingualism in both languages. (Sh. Tabatadze, 2014)

The idea of reforming bilingual education arose in order to improve the effectiveness of teaching the state language in non-Georgian-language schools. In bilingual education, language learning takes place in parallel with subject instruction. If a bilingual education program is well planned and implemented, students demonstrate higher academic performance and significantly greater cognitive development than monolingual (single-language) children. If, however, the program is not properly implemented, it can be potentially harmful, as the student may fail to fully acquire either language or the academic subjects.

The weakest form of bilingual education is considered to be *submersion*. In submersion programs, the language of instruction for part of the students is a second language, different from their home language, while for others it is their mother tongue. This approach is often linked not only to linguistic goals but also to state political objectives – namely, that assimilation on the basis of language is more advantageous for the state in areas where representatives of different language groups live together. In Georgia, the program currently implemented is precisely a submersion program.

No comprehensive research has been conducted in Georgia within the framework of the submersion model. The fact that non-Georgian-speaking students study in Georgian-language sectors within Georgian schools raises questions regarding their academic performance. General observation suggests that results within the program are not always successful. In some cases, children manage to succeed academically and become as competent in the second language as in their mother tongue. However, such cases are minimal – not only in Georgia but also according to global experience.

Researchers rightly note that only effective bilingual education programs ensure balanced bilingualism and the development of linguistic competence in both languages. An ineffective bilingual program can even hinder both language acquisition and academic performance. Therefore, it is essential that educational institutions develop and implement effective bilingual education programs in order to realize the advantages of bilingualism.

In our daily lives, the growing demand for learning a second language, or foreign languages in general, has given even greater significance to the development of the field of linguistics. Language researchers face the question: by what means, methods, and tools can the goals of second language learning be effectively achieved?

There are numerous factors that significantly influence the outcomes of language learning. Among

these, the most important are age-related characteristics, socio-cultural environment, genetics, individual cognitive abilities, and so on. However, one of the key factors is the methodology, approaches, and strategies of language teaching. While the core principles of these strategies are more or less the same for all individuals, the form and content differ depending on the goals and individual characteristics of the learner.

It should be noted that the strategies presented here can also be applied to younger language learners; however, adults tend to have a higher potential for success, as they are able to take an active role in selecting specific strategies based on the difficulties encountered in the learning process, their individual abilities, and their future plans.

The development of humanity makes the process of change irreversible in every sphere of human existence, and education is no exception. Learning methods and strategies evolve depending on the specific objectives a person faces. The only constant is the need to learn a second or foreign language, regardless of socio-cultural background.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that language learning is a process that can be overcome, provided there is the right direction and motivation to achieve the goal. The language learner generally has more or less defined objectives, and taking these into account, they can actively participate in the selection of language learning methods and approaches that are more closely aligned with their future goals.

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