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Perspectives on Intercultural Communication in the Process of Second Language Acquisition

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Abstract. *In today's globalized world, bilingual education is no longer merely a means of enhancing linguistic competence; it has become an important instrument for intercultural dialogue and social integration. This article explores the complex challenges of bilingual education, which arise at the methodological, psycholinguistic, and linguistic levels. Georgia is a multi-ethnic country, making the issue of bilingual education highly relevant. In contemporary linguistics and pedagogy, language acquisition is no longer viewed merely as the memorization of grammatical and lexical units; rather, it is closely linked to an understanding of the historical memory, cultural codes, and social norms of the society that speaks the target language. The paper emphasizes that incorporating cultural aspects into language instruction enhances student motivation and develops their intercultural competence. The article focuses specifically on historical and cultural relations between Georgia and Azerbaijan, examining the legacy of prominent Azerbaijani figures who were active in Tbilisi (M. F. Akhundov, M. Sh. Vazeh, and J. Sh. Mammadguluzade). The research demonstrates that the use of such historical-cultural parallels and texts renders the process of acquiring a second language more effective, meaningful, and interactive.*

Keywords: *intercultural communication, Georgian-Azerbaijani relations, language teaching, bilingualism, education, tolerance, pedagogical aspects*

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İkinci dilin mənimsənilməsi prosesində mədəniyyətlərarası ünsiyyətə dair perspektivlər

Mariam Koberidze

Xülasə. *Müasir qloballaşan dünyada ikidilli təhsil artıq sadəcə dil bacarıqlarını təkmilləşdirmək vasitəsi deyil, həm də mədəniyyətlərarası dialoq və sosial inteqrasiya üçün mühüm bir alətə çevrilmişdir. Bu məqalə ikidilli təhsilin metodoloji, psixolinqvistik və linqvistik səviyyələrdə ortaya çıxan mürəkkəb çətinliklərini araşdırır. Gürcüstanın çoxetnoslu ölkə olması ikidilli təhsil məsələsini xüsusilə aktual edir. Müasir dilçilik və pedaqogikada dilin mənimsənilməsi artıq yalnız qrammatik və leksik vahidlərin əzbərlənməsi kimi deyil, həm də hədəf dildə danışan cəmiyyətin tarixi yaddaşının, mədəni kodlarının və sosial normalarının dərk edilməsi ilə sıx bağlı bir proses kimi nəzərdən keçirilir. Məqalədə vurğulanır ki, dil tədrisinə mədəni aspektlərin daxil edilməsi şagirdlərin motivasiyasını artırır və onların mədəniyyətlərarası səriştələrini inkişaf etdirir. Məqalə xüsusilə Gürcüstan və Azərbaycan arasındakı tarixi-mədəni əlaqələrə diqqət yetirərək, Tbilisidə fəaliyyət göstərmiş görkəmli azərbaycanlı şəxsiyyətlərin (M. F. Axundov, M. Ş. Vazeh və C. Ş. Məmmədquluzadə) irsini*

araşdırır. Tədqiqat göstərir ki, bu cür tarixi-mədəni paralellərdən və mətnlərdən istifadə ikinci dilin mənimsənilməsi prosesini daha səmərəli, mənalı və interaktiv edir.

Açar sözlər: *mədəniyyətlərarası ünsiyyət, Gürcüstan-Azərbaycan əlaqələri, dil tədrisi, ikidillilik, təhsil, tolerantlıq, pedaqoji aspektlər*

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Introduction

The processes of globalization and technological development have placed a special emphasis on examining the current state of intercultural communication and best practices, identifying related challenges, and developing and implementing effective strategies to address them. Education plays a significant role in this regard. Through educational programs that foster dialogue among students from diverse cultural, belief, and religious backgrounds, education can promote social cohesion and peaceful coexistence. Improving the current state of intercultural relations inevitably requires a focus on intercultural education, as such education can significantly contribute to the development of a sustainable and tolerant society. The foundation of intercultural competence is the unity of three components: knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

In general, knowledge consists of possessing information about something, as well as the skills required to perform a task or action; meanwhile, "intercultural knowledge and competence" is defined as a combination of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral skills and characteristics that facilitate effective and appropriate interaction within diverse cultural contexts. Skills are capabilities that are primarily acquired and developed through learning; they involve carrying out actions directed toward achieving a desired outcome. Intercultural skills enable us to establish effective and acceptable relationships with individuals from different cultures. An attitude is a person’s perspective or opinion regarding something or someone. It belongs to the emotional realm and reflects our preferences, likes and dislikes, as well as our judgments about what is significant and what is not. Intercultural attitudes encompass a person’s openness, curiosity, and willingness to accept and learn about the characteristics of other cultures. Competence is a collective concept that entails an individual’s mastery of a specific subject – achieved through acquiring knowledge about it, interacting with it, developing relevant skills, and cultivating a particular attitude toward it (Malazonia et al., 2017).

This article examines complex issues within the process of bilingual education that arise at the methodological, psycholinguistic, and linguistic levels. As a multi-ethnic country, Georgia faces a particularly relevant need for bilingual education. Using the example of Georgian-Azerbaijani relations, the article aims to identify and analyze key perspectives and challenges that can facilitate the effective implementation of bilingual education models. At the same time, the use of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed research methods is significant for evaluating learning outcomes.

Methods

Research into the process of bilingual education is a complex field that integrates quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methodological approaches. Contemporary research increasingly focuses on integrated methods to accurately assess a student's use of their linguistic repertoire within an educational environment. In this regard, descriptive analysis, comparison, observation, interviews,

discussion, and the analysis of scholarly literature prove effective. These methods aim to foster an in-depth understanding of the process, as well as to examine the experiences, perceptions, and contexts of both students and educators. Research conducted within the classroom identifies a problem, introduces a new strategy, observes the results, and improves teaching practice. Research into the process of bilingual education is a complex field that integrates quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methodological approaches. Contemporary research increasingly focuses on integrated methods to accurately assess how students utilize their linguistic repertoires within educational settings. In this context, descriptive analysis, comparison, observation, interviews, discussion, and the analysis of scholarly literature prove effective.

Results and discussion

In the context of contemporary globalization and regional integration, educational and cultural dialogue between neighboring countries has acquired particular significance. Georgia and Azerbaijan are linked by centuries-old historical, cultural, and social ties. The Georgian-Armenian cultural synthesis, which has evolved over centuries, provides a solid foundation for modern intercultural dialogue. In this context, for Azerbaijani-speaking students living in Georgia, proficiency in Georgian as a second language is not merely a linguistic skill; it is also a crucial prerequisite for academic success, professional self-realization, and full integration into socio-economic life.

Within the framework of bilingual education, Georgian-Azerbaijani relations represent a strategic direction of state policy aimed at the integration of ethnic Azerbaijanis living in Georgia, the preservation of their cultural identity, and the strengthening of good-neighborly ties between the two countries. Bilingual education reform has a direct impact on the quality of educational resources and civic engagement. An important step in this regard is the "1+4" program in Georgia's higher education institutions (which offers students from ethnic minorities a one-year preparatory course in the Georgian language, followed by the opportunity to pursue undergraduate studies). However, language learning does not take place in isolation; it is closely linked to Azerbaijani-language schools, the specifics of intercultural communication, and the sociolinguistic environment.

Cultural Parallels: The rich history of coexistence between the Georgian and Azerbaijani peoples creates a unique intercultural space. For centuries, Tbilisi served as a cultural and literary hub for both nations. The life of Mirza Fatali Akhundov (1812–1878) is closely linked to Georgia. In 1834, Akhundov moved permanently to Tbilisi, where he began working in the Viceroy's chancellery as a translator of Oriental languages. Concurrently, he engaged in pedagogical work at the Tbilisi District School, teaching the Turkish and Persian languages. Mirza Akhundov's contributions played a significant role in the development of Azerbaijani and Near Eastern literature, as well as public thought. He maintained friendships and close relationships with various Georgian public figures (such as Dimitri Kipiani, Giorgi Eristavi, Alexander Chavchavadze, and Grigol Orbeliani). Notable among his works are six comedies ("Molla Ibrahim Khalil the Alchemist", "The Botanist and the Dervish Mastali Shah", "The Bear That Outwitted the Robber", "The Adventures of a Miser" – also known as "Haji Gara" –and "Lawyers in Tabriz"), as well as various poems and letters. In Tbilisi, on Vakhtang Gorgasali Street, there is a museum – established in a building constructed with his own funds – that preserves his memory and develops cultural and educational projects (Kazumov, 2021).

Mirza Shafi Vazeh (1794–1852) was a prominent Azerbaijani poet, educator, and calligrapher. His life was closely linked to Georgia: from 1840, he taught the Azerbaijani and Persian languages at the Tiflis district school. In 1844, he established a literary circle in Tiflis, which brought together both local and foreign intellectuals. During his time in Tiflis, the German poet and traveler Friedrich Bodenstedt studied Eastern languages under him. Bodenstedt translated Vazeh's poems into German and published a book titled "The Songs of Mirza Shafi", which gained immense popularity in Europe.

Mirza Shafi Vazeh passed away in Tiflis and is buried in the Tiflis Botanical Garden (within the Muslim Pantheon) (Shaqulashvili, 2014, p. 3).

Jalil Mammadguluzade (1866, Nakhichevan – 1932) was a prominent Azerbaijani writer, publicist, playwright, and public figure. He is particularly well-known as the founder and editor of ″Molla Nasraddin" – the first illustrated satirical magazine in the East. Jalil Mammadguluzade had close ties to Georgia:

In 1887, he graduated from the Gori Teachers' Seminary, where he received his pedagogical education. From 1903, he lived in Tbilisi, where he worked for the Azerbaijani newspaper "Sharqi-Rus". It was in Tbilisi, on April 7, 1906, that he published the first issue of the magazine "Molla Nasraddin", which exerted a profound influence on the satirical literature of the Near East and Central Asia. He was an active advocate for women's rights and for the transition of the Azerbaijani language to a Latin-based script. Notable works from his creative output include the play "The Tea Set". The short story cycle "An Incident in the Village of Danabash", the popular short story "The Postbox," the tragicomedy "The Dead" (1909), and the play "The Assembly of Madmen" (Mammadguluzade, 1983, p. 396).

The Importance of Cultural Competence in Education: Language instruction should not be limited to dry grammar alone. For instance, when teaching Georgian etiquette and idioms (such as "Mravalzhamieri" or "Gagimarjos") to an Azerbaijani-speaking student, it is important to compare them with their cultural equivalents in the Azerbaijani language. This approach reduces cultural distance and enhances the student's motivation.

The linguistic competence of students enrolled in the "1+4" program is directly linked to the quality of their school education. In Georgia, Azerbaijani language schools (in the Kvemo Kartli region – Marneuli, Dmanisi, Bolnisi, Gardabani, Tsalka, etc.) employ a bilingual education model; however, a number of difficulties arise in practice.

Bilingualism has long been considered an important aspect of education. In Georgia, it has become common for a child who knows two languages to study in a monolingual school environment; however, international practice offers various perspectives on monolingual children studying in a bilingual environment. All of this has a distinct impact on a child's linguistic competence.

There are various definitions of the term "bilingualism." The term can refer to an individual who possesses even a minimal level of proficiency in just one skill (writing, reading, listening, or speaking) in a second language (Leonard Bloomfield). From a linguistic perspective, bilingualism is considered to be a perfect, fluent command of both languages – comparable to that of a native speaker (Baker, 2011, p. 11) – implying a level of proficiency where linguistic processes from the two languages do not become conflated.

However, contemporary research on bilingualism highlights the connection between bilingualism and cognitive functions – specifically regarding general intelligence and linguistic abilities, such as verbal and non-verbal intelligence, divergent thinking, academic achievement, and metalinguistic awareness.

Many international studies now point to the benefits associated with bilingualism in terms of language development. Some studies emphasize the importance of bilingualism in the development of creative and divergent thinking, as well as in improving analytical thinking, language structure and comprehension, and the ability to respond appropriately to feedback. Many other studies confirm that the benefits of bilingual education include the following: bilingualism contributes to the development

of analytical thinking and metalinguistic awareness; bilingual children are better able to determine the semantic meaning of words and use it compared to monolinguals; and monolinguals pay more attention to the acoustics of words than to their semantics (Tabatadze, 2014, p. 3). Bilinguals have a larger vocabulary in both languages than monolinguals; the diversity of their vocabulary determines the freedom of thought, flexibility, creativity and originality; Bilinguals are better able to connect stories and events, as well as distinguish between various concepts, than monolinguals; in terms of stages of semantic development, bilingual individuals are two to three years ahead of monolingual individuals; bilinguals possess more flexible and analytical linguistic skills (Goduadze, 1985, pp. 3–4).

Researchers rightly point out that only effective bilingual educational programs ensure balanced bilingualism and the development of linguistic competence in both languages. Ineffective bilingual educational programs can be detrimental to both language acquisition and academic achievement. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance for educational institutions to develop and implement effective bilingual educational programs in order to harness the benefits of bilingualism.

Let us examine the challenges that hinder second-language acquisition and intercultural communication in higher education. Linguistic issues: the typological distance between languages (Qəhrəmanova, 2026). The primary, fundamental obstacle to teaching Georgian as a second language is this linguistic distance.

The Georgian writing system and phonetic inventory contain sharp, abrupt sounds (p, q, k, zh, ch, h, j, ch, kh ts, dz, ts) – the correct articulation and perception of which often pose difficulties for Azerbaijani-speaking students. Regarding morphology and syntax, the agglutinative nature of the Georgian language, the polysemy of its verbs, its complex grammatical system, and its ergative structure differ fundamentally from the syntactic structure of the Azerbaijani language, necessitating a prolonged process of grammatical adaptation (Gogoladze & Koberidze, 2016, p. 242).

For students in general education schools and those preparing in the Georgian language, reading Georgian texts and comprehending what has been read is essential for mastering the language. In this regard, it is necessary to use an adapted textbook in which Georgian texts are accompanied by a parallel translation into Azerbaijani (Gyulmamedov, 1998, p. 3; Saville-Troike & Barto, 2018).

Methodological and Resource-Related Barriers: The effectiveness of language instruction depends largely on learning materials and the teacher (a principle that applies to any language). The following challenges have been identified in this area:

A lack of specialized textbooks: General-purpose textbooks are frequently used, which fail to account for the linguistic typology and typical errors characteristic of the Azerbaijani-speaking population. Integration of modern technologies: There is limited use of digital resources, interactive applications, and AI-based language platforms within the learning process.

Sociolinguistic and Psychological Aspects: Language learning does not occur in a vacuum; it is heavily influenced by the surrounding environment. Lack of a linguistic environment: Students living in densely populated areas rarely use Georgian in their daily lives, which slows down the language-learning process.

Language barriers and fear: Due to insufficient practice, students develop a fear of making mistakes, which hinders the uninhibited development of communication skills. Current Perspectives and Intercultural Approaches:

- Educational Initiatives (the "1+4" Program): The "1+4" program, implemented in Georgia's higher education institutions, has radically transformed the situation. Language preparatory courses not only facilitate Georgian language instruction but also create an intercultural space where Azerbaijani-speaking and Georgian-speaking young people interact daily, exchange cultural experiences, and break down stereotypes.
- Integrating Intercultural Competence into Instruction.
- Integrating Intercultural Competence into Instruction. Modern methods of second-language teaching require that language instruction encompass more than just grammar. Intercultural dialogue in the classroom: texts and learning materials should reflect both Georgian and Azerbaijani cultural contexts, historical parallels, and shared traditions. Bilingual resources: a bilingual teaching model assists students in mastering the state language while preserving their cultural identity.
- Non-formal education and exchange projects – such as language camps and joint cultural activities (theater, literary evenings, sports) – create a natural intercultural environment. In this setting, language ceases to be merely a "compulsory subject" and instead becomes a genuine tool for communication and friendship among peers.

Conclusion

Thus, teaching the Georgian language to the Azerbaijani-speaking population is a reciprocal, intercultural process. Successful learning depends not only on grammatical teaching methods but also on how effectively centuries-old Georgian-Azerbaijani cultural ties are utilized to restore trust and foster dialogue. Proficiency in the state language enables individuals to fully realize their civic and professional potential, while allowing society to become culturally rich and diverse.

Bilingual education serves as a significant educational strategy that facilitates the integration of national minorities. On one hand, it ensures the preservation of the linguistic and cultural identity of minority groups; on the other, it guarantees a high level of proficiency in the state language—a prerequisite for the full integration of future citizens into society. To achieve this, a variety of electronic resources and webinars are essential.

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