

THE NOTION ETHNO-LINGUISTIC VITALITY IN SOCIOLINGUISTICS

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The processes of globalization, the absence of monolingual countries in the modern world, and, consequently, the growing tendency of nation-states to preserve and protect the uniqueness of their language determine the dynamics of research on language and ethnic problems. The aim of our article is to define the notion «ethno-linguistic vitality» and to offer an overview of the language group vitality framework as it developed in English sociolinguistic literature. «Nowadays in Ukraine ethnic culture and identity are in crisis, [...] the Ukrainian language has remained the only marker of the entire complex of the Ukrainian ethnic culture, but shortly it can be superseded by the Russian language, and then by English and others. [...] So, European and global integration must not lead to a cultural unification and denationalization of the Ukrainian ethnic group» [1: 119].

The need to update categoric system of sociolinguistics

The prior condition to the increased interest in language situation as a subject of sociolinguistic enquire is a growing body of literature in the area. In particular, the recent sociolinguistic theories rise beyond just describing or explaining social phenomena, but also have the capacity to affect human development positively by means of recommendations and practical guidance. The initial list of contributors to it sprang from the monograph «Language situation in Ukraine: between the conflict and consensus» [2], that jointly written by philologists, sociolinguists, historians and specialists in political science. The combined efforts of different specialists gave the opportunity: 1) to identify historic background to ambiguous situation in Ukraine; 2) to analyze the validity of the modern polls on the language issue in the state; 3) to define the notion basis of the language laws in Ukraine with chronological analysis; 4) to highlight the problem of international norms implementation into national law; 5) to ensure linguistic and political-ideological confrontation in the state and the importance of external factors in the politicization of language problems and etc.

On carrying out analysis of the contemporary language situation in Ukraine, the authors emphasize that «the language is one of the most important public domain, which serves not only for communication between members of society, but as a social phenomenon coupled by the essence of historic nation existence and the individual self-consciousness, as well as the most expressive national identity dimension». Additionally, the researchers pay attention to the fact that «the most common languages coexistence in Ukraine did not become a source of social conflicts. However, state language policy is one of the most polemical political issue, that periodically causes tension especially when there occurs language groups artificial mobilization for the sake of different political forces» [2: 119].

Another example of collective investigation is «Language policy and language situation in Ukraine: analysis and recommendations» [3] edited by Y. Besters-Dilger, which appeared as the result of the project «Language policy in Ukraine: anthropological, linguistic aspects and further prospect». Scholars in five fields of science: anthropology, linguistics, political science, law, sociology, assessing the state of the Ukrainian and Russian languages coexistence on the territory of Ukraine, note that «according to different sociological inquire (mass and focus group) the level of conflict on language issues is still low» [3: 131].

S. Kotygorenko suggests, «polyethnicity in Ukraine is objective, historically generated constituent of its social realities. Distinctions as to ethnic structure, language, cultural, ideological, and geopolitical aspects for population in Ukraine produce contradictions on the grounds of relevant disagreement. However, the hallmark of Ukrainians at all times has been specific cultural tolerance – the ability to perceive and assimilate other culture and ideology. Therefore, Ukrainian ethnos, quantitatively prevailing and formally recognized as title nation, does not constitute an assimilation threat to ethnic minorities. Contemporary Ukraine can be defined as a region with relatively low degree of ethnic conflictness and absence of antagonistic contradictions in inter-ethnic relations» [4: 25].

Nevertheless, there is real anxiety in modern studies, that «the potential for conflict on language problem in Ukraine is quite high» [5]. In theses of

independence period, the authors intensively argued the peculiarities of ethnic and linguistic interaction in ethno-state formation, ethno-political studies, Ukrainian studies and linguistic aspects [6-9].

Professor H.Matsyuk insists on making analysis of language and ethnic interaction. The target audience of her textbook «Applied sociolinguistics. The language policy issue», is students, which can find out in the tutorial pages about the enlargement of concept «ethnicity» with linguistic factor [10: 16-17], about the concepts «language» and «consciousness» (in particular ethnic and national) relation.

Thus, the recent sociolinguistic research acknowledge the importance of complex approach to the language situation in ethno-linguistic context. By doing this it will be possible, first, to predict the coexistence of two or more language communities; secondly, to identify objectively further ethno-linguistic development: assimilation, integration, segregation or marginalization; thirdly, to determine trends of confrontations or conflicts and to take measures for active tolerance cultivation. «The growing multicultural cultivation of national communities illuminates the problem of tolerant attitude to the Other (the Stranger), which can be measured in two categories – «active tolerance» considered as my conscious respect for the other and «passive tolerance» – as a forced necessity to «tolerate» the presence of the other» [11: 92]. This description can be successfully realized by incorporating popular international concept «ethno-linguistic vitality».

About «ethno-linguistic vitality» definition

The concept are generally accepted to philosophy, biology, medicine and psychology. It refers to life force or force of life function explicit in the body, which influences all aspects of life [12].

The notion «ethno-linguistic vitality» was initially introduced in the collective work «Language, ethnicity and intergroup relations» by Howard Giles, Richard Y. Bourhis, D. M. Taylor 1977 [13; 14: 190]. Since that event, various language-use typologies have been proposed, but in each typology, the authors

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Emigration ▪ Immigration • <i>Distribution of L1 speakers</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ L1 presence in historical ancestral territory ▪ L1 concentration in national/regional/urban territories ▪ Proportion of ingroup (L1) vs. outgroup speakers (L2, L3) in territory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> services ▪ Economy ▪ Media ▪ Police and military ▪ Linguistic landscape (L1 vs. L2, L3) ▪ Cultural industries ▪ Political institutions ▪ Sports and leisure ▪ Religious institutions ▪ Leadership and associative network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> relative to L2, L3 • Status of L1 language relative to L2, L3 (at municipal, regional, national, international levels) • Socio-economic status (national, international levels) • Socio-economic status of L1 community relative to L2, L3
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Demographic variables are those related to the absolute number of members composing the language group and their distribution throughout the urban, regional or national territory. The number factors constituting a language group are usually based on one or a combination of the following linguistic indicators: L1 as the mother tongue of community speakers; knowledge of the first (L1) or second (L2) language; and L1 and/or L2 language use in private settings such as at home and with friends. Number factors refer to the language community's absolute group numbers, its birth rate, mortality rate, age pyramid, endogamy/ exogamy, and its patterns of immigration and emigration in and out of the ancestral territory. Exogamy, or the rate of linguistically mixed marriages, affects the vitality of language minorities because such parents often use the dominant language of their immediate region to communicate with their children and choose this language to

educate them in the school system. Distribution factors refer to the numeric concentration of speakers in various parts of the territory, their proportion relative to outgroup speakers, and whether or not the language community still occupies its ancestral territory. The distribution of L1 speakers in a given territory (urban or regional) is strongly related to the strength of the ingroup social network and hence, to the frequency of L1 language use in private and public settings. The higher the proportion of the group members in a given regional population, the stronger are the networks of linguistic contacts and the more likely the minority language will be used for intra-group communication in private situations. Minority language groups whose numbers and network intensity are strong in a given region may even be in a position to use their minority language for public use such as in local stores and business and obtain some government services in their minority language. The vitality of a language community can be influenced 1) positively when the group achieves a majority position within a regional territory or political jurisdiction, and 2) negatively when the group is spread too thinly across urban or regional territories. Taken together, these demographic indicators can be used to monitor demolinguistic trends such as language maintenance, language shift, language loss and inter-generational transmission of the L1 mother tongue. Within democracies, demographic factors constitute a fundamental asset for language groups as “strength in numbers” can be used as a legitimizing tool to grant language communities with the institutional control they need to ensure their intergenerational continuity within multilingual societies [14: 192].

The extent to which a language community has gained formal and informal representation in the institutions of a community, region, state or nation constitutes its ‘institutional support’. Informal support refers to the degree to which a language community has organized itself as a pressure group or organization to represent and safeguard its own language interests in various state and private domains: the development of cultural and artistic production; teaching in schools; health care; the inclusion of the language on road signs and commercial signs. The presence and quality of leaders who can head the formal and informal institutions

representing language groups also contributes to the institutional support of language communities. The absence of quality leadership can undermine gains achieved by previous generations of minority groups on the institutional support front and can mortgage future gains needed for the community survival of the next generation of group members.

The status variables are those related to a language community's status as a dynamic culturally and economically vibrant community, and the prestige of its language. The social prestige of English in the world today is so strong for socioeconomic, scientific and cultural reasons that more and more states are promoting its teaching as a second language from primary school to university. Social evidence shows that speakers of high-status groups enjoy a more positive social identity and can more readily mobilize to maintain or improve their vitality position within the state. Conversely, being a member of a disparaged low-status linguistic group can sap the collective will of minorities to maintain themselves as a distinctive language community, leading to eventual linguistic assimilation. The prestige of language groups can also be affected favourably or unfavourably through the adoption of language laws that enshrine the relative status of language communities within multilingual states.

The above three dimensions combine to affect in one direction or the other the overall strength or vitality of language communities. A language group may be weak on demographic variables but strong on institutional support and status factors resulting in a medium vitality position relative to a language minority weak on all three vitality dimensions. Language communities whose overall vitality is strong are more likely to survive as distinctive collective entities than groups whose vitality is weak.

The above-mentioned factors are called objective vitality in ethno-linguistic theory. Such objective assessments of vitality serve the descriptive and analytic needs to more rigorously compare and contrast the language communities in contact. Given linguistic minorities' often precarious position in multi-cultural

settings, vitality investigation are even more likely to promote the evidence-based assessments of the situation than do other theoretical approaches.

The objective vitality framework, gained the popularity among foreign scholars, is used to describe the relative position of language communities in numerous bilingual and multilingual settings. Thus, the volume of «Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development» in 2011 covered the study of ethno-linguistic vitality topic. On objective vitality assessments basis the analyses of Francophones of Quebec, Hispanics in the USA, the Catalan in Spain, and the Basque in Spain were made. As authors of «Tradition and Innovation in the Ethno-linguistic Vitality theory» have it the annual number of new publications mentioning ‘Ethno-linguistic Vitality’ (EV theory henceforth) has been steadily growing during the last 15 years, from 20 in 1995 to 144 in 2009) [15: 101].

Furthermore exploring of the factors for language group vitality makes scholars come to conclusion that to measure how group members actually perceive their own group and outgroup important vitality dimensions is of importance. Taking into consideration objective and subjective vitality data one can observe exaggeration of the vitality degree for outgroup assessment. It can result outgroup stereotypes and anxiety about ingroup maintenance. Investigating the role of socio-psychological variables in intergroup relation researchers constructed subjective vitality dimensions. In order to take into account the individuals’ perceptions of the societal conditions influencing them, the subjective ethno-linguistic vitality questionnaire (SVQ) was constructed, included questions on the perceptions of status, demographic and institutional support factors [14: 191]. However, various vitality useful factors have been proposed the number of typical dimensions are still relevant. In the next papers, we will specify possible variables of objective and subjective vitality. Here it would be theoretically useful to distinguish a group’s sustainability from vitality. Vitality is the ability of a community to act as a collective entity, while sustainability is the ability to continue existing as a group. M Ehala suggests the Estonian diaspora as an example. After WWII it was organized very quickly on local, regional and global levels, established its schools,

churches and organizations. Thus, although the vitality of the communities has remained quite high thanks to the active older generations, the communities could not be considered sustainable because of the breakdown of intergenerational transmission of language, culture and exogamic marriage. Therefore, vitality is no guarantee of sustainability [16: 3].

Undoubtedly, the concept of ethno-linguistic vitality were strongly criticized since the introduction of the notion in 1977. Despite the criticism, the basic concept and the score of the theory have remained intact in subsequent work within this paradigm. The vitality framework has managed to bridge sociolinguistics, cultural studies and social psychology.