Bilingual Identity: Issues of Self-Identification of Bilinguals in Malaysia and Tatarstan

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ABSTRACT

Am I English when I speak English and Russian when I speak Russian if I use both equally well? Am I the same when I speak English and when I speak Russian? In what cases would I prefer to use which one of them? These questions are at the core of the issue of the identity of bilinguals, particularly if they suffer in any way from fragmented identity, linguistic interference, misunderstanding in a monolingual society and other related problems. This paper aims to look closely at these issues in certain bilingual environments in order to define the role of multilingualism in the self-identification of an individual. Reflecting on experience over forty years of teaching bilinguals, multilinguals and L2 English-speakers, we may draw the conclusion that anomie, identity-conflict, results not from the experience of bilingualism or multilingualism per se but arises where anxiety and lack of self-confidence in one's own identity - either individually or collectively - is already present. It seems evident, then, that the root cause of alienation lies not in bilingualism itself but in the conflict of cultures. The implication appears to be that cultural self-identification governs language proficiency rather than is determined by it.

Keywords: bilingualism; identity; linguistic self-identification; identity crisis; culture-conflict

BACKGROUND

The monolingual mindset as a background for multiple studies on such an extraordinary phenomenon as bilingualism[1] is not a norm any more. Nowadays it is often claimed that, globally, multilingualism might be more widespread and mundane than monolingualism, though this is hard to estimate, as the extent of language command for an ability to speak a language to be called multilingualism is still a matter of scientific debate[2]. The most recent studies in multilingualism point to a rapid expansion of the ability to speak several languages as a premise to study the sociocultural factors of its development (Zare & Mobarakeh 2013). In any case, it is a fact of modern life that we are witnessing the expansion of a global language, i.e. English in its varied forms. In this paper we examine issues of self-identification of bilinguals in Malaysia and Tatarstan drawing on two cases of non-immigration-based acculturation that involves bilingual experience of majority groups living in an area, since those are exactly the topics less covered by scientists in comparison with immigration multilingualism research (Chen, Benet-Martinez & Bond 2008).

Bilingualism is often discussed with regard to the issue of the identity of bilinguals, particularly if they suffer in any way from fragmented identity, linguistic interference, misunderstanding in a monolingual society and other related problems. This paper aims to look closely at these issues in the bilingual environments of Malaysia and the Republic of Tatarstan in Russia in order to define the role of multilingualism in the self-identification of an individual.

There is abundant scientific evidence that all of the mentioned side-effects of bilingualism existed in the recent past. For instance, Brophy and Aberle described value

conflicts inhibiting the satisfactory development of bilinguals and noted their tendency to withdraw early from school (Brophy & Aberle 1966). Speech defects associated with emotional disequilibrium, such as stuttering and stammering were noted by Lewis (1953) as prevalent among Ghanaian bilingual children and by Brown (1936) among Slovak immigrants in the USA. More recent studies (Minami 2011, p.70) point to similar problems, including the apprehension that bilinguals may suffer from the phenomenon of semilingualism – the inability to function adequately in either language (sometimes referred to as 'having two second languages'), which could impede the speakers' social integration. However, the weak point in all these debates has been discussed in recent works, with the conclusion that it might not be the second language that is interfering, but unfavourable learning environment that causes anomy[3] and similar problems (Minami 2011, Gonzalez 2008).

Taking this into account, it might seem that with the growth of multilingualism these problems fade and perhaps scholars should better turn their gaze on monolingual self-perception, as that of a rarer and perhaps more vulnerable type these days. However, the authors' personal experience of living in a multicultural environment and/or being multilingual prompts the view that a certain bewilderment and trouble with self-identification and self-presentation do exist, to a greater or less extent, for those who have to switch codes[4].

IDENTITY AND COMMUNICATION

Gorenburg (2004) argues that the term 'identity' can be used in scientific discourse only on condition that it is properly defined, otherwise it is misleading. In this essay 'identity' is used to denote not as he proposes, "a construct of some array of forces, either through conscious manipulation by elites or as a result of structural and institutional factors that encourage individuals to identify in particular ways" (Gorenburg 2004, p. 4). We are more concerned with the personal self-identification and self-perception of a bilingual, irrespective of the reasons that promoted such sentiment.

Ricoeur in his book *Oneself as Another* (1995) argues that one should distinguish between two aspects of identity: Latin *idem*, or identical, resembling, analogical, as opposed to other, differing, changing, and *ipse*, referring to 'selfness', or being oneself, as opposed to 'other-than-self' or alien. As a matter of fact, these notions sometimes overlap. Selfness necessarily implies identity, as equality to oneself. Defining myself is in essence determining the identity between the subject and the predicate at a certain period of time. Heracleitus is said to have argued that "all things are in motion and nothing at rest; he compares them to the stream of a river, and says that you cannot go into the same water twice" (Plato 2010, p.89). According to Gorenburg (2004), identity, and ethnic identity in particular, is potentially malleable, a process, rather than a state. In such case it is about finding oneself in the stream where one's flow of thoughts (or mode of thinking manifested in a language or languages) might or might not coincide with the river flow, or the dominant instrument of communication used in the society. Being aware of oneself at a certain moment of time, comparing this sensation with the past ones, on the one hand, and with the responses from the environment, on the other, a person becomes conscious of himself or herself and projects this identity outside, again, for the cycle to repeat over and over again. Anticipating the next curve, correcting this projection, staying the same or changing – the human being communicates, that is to say, lives.

Paraphrasing the well-known Cartesian utterance '*Cogito ergo sum*' as 'I am the one who thinks' may lead us to the statement that the subject is identified in the process of reflection viewed as self-revelation through introspection, looking inside oneself. From this viewpoint, self-determining is based on acknowledgement of thinking as one's integral part.

The way we think is closely connected to the way we express the result of our reflection. Can it be said that a person has several minds, or several thinking systems, in the case when he or she is bilingual or multilingual? Can it be deduced then that an inability to use one of those systems that the speaker has at his or her disposal may lead to certain problems of mental character? If so, it may be equally true of a monolingual whose dilemma is expressed by the statement 'I have no one to talk to'- with the amendment '…in the language I want to talk in'. This communication barrier may become an inhibiting factor for one's personal development, which again brings us to the statement that personal identity is tied into society, through the language, or into societies through languages.

Seventy-two years ago, Yale University Press published I.L. Child's study of the children of Italian immigrants in New York, under the title *Italian or American? The Second Generation in Conflict* (1943). It revealed a disturbing picture of alienation among Italo-American adolescents – bewilderment, frustration and culture-conflict – which many of these young people sought to resolve by withdrawal from the wider American community into the Italian culture and language of home, or by severance from their family. Either course involved distress and rejection, the alternative to which seemed only to be apathy and loss of self-esteem.

Personal identity in a society is determined by the other, and not by linguistic repertoire alone, but perception of the subject as well, manifested in a certain reaction or feedback. In the same way as the ultrasound reflected from an object tells us about its size, surface, relief and other qualities, this signal from the other, this reflected identity, enables us to make a judgment about ourselves: 'Someone made me a compliment; it means I am agreeable. Someone thanked me; it means I have done something good'. Identity is always revealed in society, through communication. Social exclusion, gaps in communication lead to aberrations in one's efforts to get identified (elaborated in one of our previous works: Vavilova 2014).

The bilingual adolescents in Child's study were experiencing a crisis of identity due, it seemed, to "an inability to resolve the conflicting demands made upon the bilingual individual by the two linguistic-cultural communities in which he finds himself" (Baetens Beardsmore 1982, p.154). Lambert, Giles and Picard (1975, p.127) express the problem of external demands and pressure, thus:

> ... it is difficult to be both Jewish and Russian or Algerian and French, and this is so because the person involved realises that two separate networks of valued people expect him to show unambiguous signs of allegiance to one group or the other.

The same can be said of being both Muslim and British and perhaps, residually even today, of being Catholic and English. No language-conflict may be involved but a conflict of values – and therefore identity – may well emerge and it is easy to see how this may be exacerbated where the conflict of values / identity occurs in a context of bilingualism.

BILINGUALISM AND CULTURE-CONFLICT IN MALAYSIA

There are three main language groups pertaining to three distinct ethnic groups in Malaysia. Indigenous Malays, whose language is *Bahasa Melayu* – the 'national language' and therefore usually referred to as *Bahasa Malaysia*, constitute about 60% of the population. The Chinese, about 25% of the population, speak various dialects of Chinese, principally Mandarin and Hokkien. And the Indians comprising about 7% of the population speak a variety of Indian languages, but most commonly Tamil. These latter groups – Chinese and Indians – are regarded as incomers; there have been Chinese settlers in the area since at least

the 16th century – mainly as traders, but there were additional waves of settlement during the British colonial period when they came mainly as miners and labourers. English, a product of British colonial rule, was the unifying language, the language of government and administration and law, and also of education, at least in the selective-entry schools. It remained the language of government and administration until the 1970s when it was replaced by Malay as the unifying national language. This policy proved harmful in the long run to Malaysia's global commercial and academic interests and so English has made a major come-back since the early 1980s. Nevertheless, education in state-run schools and higher education remains in *Bahasa Melayu*, which is also the language of government and administration, whereas business and the media use both.

Malaysia remains an English-speaking country in as much as English-speakers can live there for years and never need know more than a smattering of Malay. But the ability to speak English and preference for English is not uniformly spread, by any means. Given the need for a common language to communicate between the different ethnic populations, English is the preferred language of the Chinese and Indians. This is a political as much as a cultural choice. Choosing English is a matter of choosing the global over the local; the modern world over the traditional. Malays opt for Malay which everybody is obliged to learn in order to function at all since it is the language of law and administration. But most of the urban, middle class Malay population is also fluent in English too. It is also preferred by the many expatriates who have settled either temporarily or permanently in Malaysia. So, multiligualism is commonplace in urban Malaysia, even among the relatively poor and poorly educated. However, the rural Malay population remains largely monolingual and English is little-known in "up-country" towns, villages and rural districts.

When we speak of English in Malaysia, we have also to remember that this too falls into two distinctive types. There is Standard English, with a marked preference for British English over American English; British speakers of English are preferred as teachers of English over Americans. But, because English has been so widely spoken in the region for so long and by such different ethnic groups, a local creole has emerged, known affectionately as *Manglish* (or, in Singapore, as *Singlish*), comprehensible to native-English speakers, but modified extensively as to vocabulary, grammar and syntax. So, a typical urban Malaysian may well speak Mandarin at home, Manglish socially, with friends of different ethnic background, *Bahasa Melayu* for official purposes and perhaps also when conversing with Malays and standard English at work especially if the workplace has an international dimension. So there are strong cultural undercurrents to bilingualism in Malaysia; every language choice is a social, cultural, political or religious statement.

Rubdy and Tan stress that "losing Malay speakers to an exogenous language such as English does not threaten national unity" (2008, p.38). However, a personal observation from the author's forty-plus years experience in education may be said to confirm and illustrate the opposite. Three decades ago, some 1500 Malay adolescents – government scholars – undertook A-Level studies in ten residential schools throughout peninsular Malaysia, in preparation for entry into degree courses in the UK. Prior to this, their education had been entirely in Malay and the majority of them came from monolingual Malay-speaking households. Their A-Level studies required a switch to English as the medium of instruction and, of course, most required an intensive English programme throughout in order to make this transition successfully. They were encouraged to use English as widely as possible, both in class and in their leisure hours.

It was found that, in the initial stages of the programme, the great majority had very positive attitudes towards their studies and towards the English language; they saw it as the door to undreamed of opportunities for foreign travel and personal advancement. But, as the course progressed, certain personal and social problems began to emerge, most acutely in the

two all-boys schools involved in the scheme. The social use of English by the A-Level students, as encouraged, began to provoke resentment within the wider body of the school. Gaik Cheng Khoo mentions certain frictions between the "urban ethnic identity" (2011, p.128) of the Malay middle-class which goes well with speaking English as well as their mother tongue, and 'tradition' which is closely connected to the religious self-identification of the people. There is little doubt that this religious / cultural antagonism was also stoked by resentment and envy at the 'privileged' status of the A-Level students and the future that was being offered to them.

This behavioural pattern conforms to the observations of Baetens Beardsmore (1982). He notes that culture-conflict is a phenomenon which is rarely acquired in the initial stages of acquiring a second language, but commonly develops as the learner progresses towards bilingualism. Today the learner is viewed as not just progressing towards bilingualism, but, it may be added, towards developing a bicultural identity or rather the identity that would suppose "the selective incorporation of cultural elements from the various cultural worldviews and practices to which a person has been exposed during his or her life" (Chen, Benet-Martinez & Bond 2008).

THE ISSUE OF BILINGUALISM IN TATARSTAN

The same religious and cultural antagonism, with its peculiarities, might be traced in another country, which we would like to examine here as well. The Republic of Tatarstan is a state within the Russian Federation where two state languages have officially been proclaimed. Tatarstan is a secular republic, on the one hand, and a multinational and multicultural state, on the other, with a mixture of ethnicities, religions and languages spoken. Mixed marriages, absence of strict language and cultural borders and official language policy sometimes make it hard to distinguish those who feel Russian and those who identify themselves as strictly Tatar. For example, there is a whole ethnic group of baptized Tatars (kryashens); conversely, married people, mostly women, often chose to adopt Islam after their spouse; at the same time, Buddhism is becoming more and more popular among young people of all ethnicities.

Tatar belongs to the group of Turkic languages and is spoken in the republic as the mother tongue mostly by Tatars who have traditionally been inclined to Islam. It co-exists with Russian as a state language under the current legislation that proclaims Tatar and Russian as equal (Law on Languages adopted in 1992, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and all the subsequent versions – analyzed in one of our previous papers: Vavilova 2006), which is not always the case. This equality is officially stated, but the fact is that they cannot function interchangeably under a lot of circumstances. For instance, under charters and other official documents of most universities theses can be defended in both languages. In most cases, however, dissertations in Tatar will not be considered for the lack of competent stuff who will be able to evaluate them, unless the topic is strictly linguistic. Procedures in these cases differ, but unofficially the author is likely to receive a denial. The same holds true for anyone who wishes to hold a position in the state apparatus, with the opposite language preference. Being fluent in Tatar is a must here, and usually bearing a Tatar name is a necessary condition as well. Certainly, these practices have no legal back-up and rejecting an applicant is accompanied with a plausible pretext.

As in Malaysia, the language of those who do not belong to the indigenous population (i.e. Russians) is still perceived as an intruder. The times when Russian seemed to pose an existential cultural threat have apparently passed, but this apprehension remains in a latent form, accompanied by the language politics that helps keep Tatar afloat as well as by the attempts to de-russify the whole Tatar culture – for instance, through the change of alphabet from Cyrillic to Latin. According to Suzanne Wertheim, these "orthographic battles" signify

a profound need to negotiate one's identity and nationhood (Wertheim 2012). This policy, especially in education, is commonly estimated as aggressive and artificially fuelled by the government, among ethnic Russians, but is unanimously praised by Tatars who wish to retain their language at all cost.

Another common feature is that both English in Malaysia and Russian in Tatarstan are the languages of a wider geographical area – the former on the global scale, and the latter – on the federal. So, alongside the desire to keep the traditional one, both the population and the government feel the need to master the other language as the gate into the world. In Tatarstan, this system is complicated by introducing a foreign language at an earlier stage at school than two decades ago (usually, English, German or French). The foreign language is by no means perceived as a time-eater, whereas the common sentiment among Russian-speakers is that Tatar is being taught at the expense of Russian, with less hours spent on learning Russian in comparison with other regions of the federation.

Strangely, this measure does not seem to work at all – most Russian speakers would not understand or speak Tatar, according to the author's experience, which would substantiate the hypothesis put forward by Teresa Wigglesworth-Baker: "[e]ducation […] has not had an effect on Russians' use of Tatar in everyday situations" (2011, p.70). True bilinguals here would be Tatars, and not Russians, with a stable code-switch pattern "Russian for official communication, Tatar for unofficial situations and everyday use in private life".

Tatarstani researchers Ibragimova and Teregulova (2014) come to the same conclusion that currently only Tatar-Russian bilingualism is truly functional, despite the efforts to promote the Russian-Tatar bilingualism as well. Sometimes members of families of Tatars become bilinguals too, through marriage, but too often the opposite tendency may be traced, which is confirmed by the observation that children in mixed marriages in urban population speak little Tatar outside Tatar classes at kindergartens and schools[5].

How does that affect the self-perception of a bilingual in Tatarstan? A number of in-depth interviews with local bilinguals unveiled several common issues. 90 % of respondents mentioned shame as one of the feelings accompanying their language use. This includes shame when realizing that one has made a mistake while speaking the second language, Russian for Tatars (usually using a word of the wrong gender or case; less often – stress), as well as shame that one has forgotten a word of one's first language and has to use a Russian equivalent. The former sentiment is more likely to appear among respondents from rural areas (in our case, students who came to study in the capital of the republic from the countryside). The latter is totally related to urban-dwellers, including people of the older generation who moved from the country in their teens. As we can see, mobility and the dynamics of bilingualism in an urban versus rural perspective are a crucial factor in forming a bilingual identity.

Among other feelings related to speaking either Russian or Tatar, were also mentioned such as uneasiness among those who speak a language more fluently, especially in the academic environment; self-consciousness about one's accent and a desire to sound more like the L2 native speaker[6]; satisfaction from being able to function equally well (e.g. receive good marks, get promotion at work); joy from communicating with monolingual friends (both Tatar and Russian).

A number of conversations with Russian monolinguals (interestingly, it is hard to find a Tatar monolingual these days) proved that they are dissatisfied with the existing asymmetrical bilingualism and most of them would love to know Tatar (which might seem contradictory to the resentment caused by the promotion of Tatar at schools by taking the hours meant for learning Russian). Nobody demonstrated any trace of identity conflict based on the language use (such as alienation, desire to escape profound misunderstanding, rejection of a language use, whether the first or the second etc). Thus, it does not follow that

the association of a language with national and cultural identity, however profoundly and intensely felt, must inevitably inflict anomy and culture-conflict upon members of such communities when they acquire, as a second language, the speech of the dominant culture. At the personal level, the situation of a Tatar bilingual is not that of a second-generation Asian bilingual in Bradford[7]: perhaps, that is more an issue of immigration and adaptation than that of bilingualism *per se*. If it were the root cause of such personality disorders, we should expect to see these traits exhibited by all bilinguals. But, while the desirability of bilingual policies in education and the media has been the subject of heated debate on academic and cultural grounds, there is little evidence of concern that bilingualism might result in any sort of personal alienation. Anxiety about the survival of national identity, language and culture, as articulated by educated bilinguals, is not the same as a personal identity crisis. If anything, it is an assertion of identity rather than confusion about it.

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE: CONFLICT OR CO-EXISTENCE?

Language determines not just the way we think but the way we live our everyday lives. Thus it has a regulatory as well as a communicative function; speaking a particular language, a person creates, and exists within, a specific psychological setting. Moving into another setting and acquiring another language creates new psychological needs and can set up tensions which break down the regulatory function of language and destroy the person's emotional equilibrium. Can this emotional / cultural conflict be averted or avoided? The answer is positive, on condition that a person develops cultural competence on a par with speech competence. One of Eveline de Jong's interviewees, a Frenchwoman with an English husband and domiciled in England, writes that language is a way of life, including eating habits, discipline, children's bed-time, the way one's free time is spent. Her children learned both ways: in England, they knew how to be English, whereas in France they felt a part of the French community (de Jong 1986). The same might be applied to Malay bilinguals who get to know another style of life and who might resist it, in this or that way, or feel this resistance from others.

In Tatarstan, however, the everyday life of a Tatar will not differ much from that of any other representative of the Russian Federation, on condition that other socio-demographic features are alike. Speaking Russian is not about switching to another culture – rather, a situation of communication, e.g. from a chat with a neighbour to giving a talk at a conference. Whereas Russian here has already passed the phase of cultural adjustment, English has not yet become a medium of another way of life, for the majority of the population. People may study it for years at school, and still be unable to communicate, mostly due to lack of practice; the 'iron curtain' between the Soviet Union and the world has become invisible, but is still perceivable in the lack of opportunity for constant and consistent immersion in situations of everyday communication with native speakers, except for those who enjoy a higher income.

Therefore the root of the problem must surely lie not in language, nor simply in the juxtaposition of two cultures, but in the nature of the relationship between the two cultures in the 'life-situation' (*Sitz in Leben*) of the individual bilingual and his or her attitude towards each of them. Language is a 'culture-bearer', the expression of a way of looking at the world. It is difficult, if not impossible, to detach a language from its cultural 'matrix'; hence, transmission of the one inevitably incurs some transmission of the other. In societies where bilingualism involves the collision of two polar cultures (Eastern versus Western, Muslim-oriented versus Christian, secular versus religious etc), with a real possibility of one affecting and changing the other to a great extent, personal identity is more likely to be affected. It is unlikely to affect Tatarstan at the same extent as it is affecting Malaysia, at this point.

Bilingualism in Tatarstan involves no deracination. This community remains embedded in its ancestral geographical, cultural and linguistic 'matrix' yet has, perforce, acquired a second language because it represents a linguistic, cultural or ethnic enclave within a surrounding dominant culture with Russian as the *lingua franca* – whilst retaining much of its national identity. But this shift is usually seen by the subjects themselves in terms of 'usefulness' – i.e. that Russian is a more 'useful' language than Tatar – and certainly does not appear to be associated with any personal confusion over identity, culture-conflict or alienation; possibly because it is a phenomenon common to the whole peer-group and there are no countervailing pressures. In adult life, any potential conflict seems to be resolved by the private-life / public-life, home / work dichotomy noted elsewhere. In fact, knowledge of any other language of the Union, including Russian, is, for most practical purposes, inessential, unless for career-purposes in a pan-national institution or profession, as it was mentioned earlier. The crucial point is that Tatarstani bilinguals enjoy emotional stability in a protective environment in which both languages and cultures have equality of status.

In Malaysia, attitudinal factors seem crucial, the attitude of the individual towards the society one has left and that which now surrounds one; and the attitude of these societies in turn towards the person. Most people gravitate willingly towards the other culture, as a promise of getting better education, a higher income and social position. What became a tradition for the Tatar people is still an innovation for the Malay, where the situation is very complex and certainly the social, political, cultural, and religious associations of language and language choice are profound and all-intrusive.

CONCLUSION

Reflecting on this, we may draw the conclusion that anomie, identity-conflict, results not from the experience of bilingualism or multilingualism *per se* but arises where anxiety and lack of self-confidence in one's own identity – either individually or collectively – is already present. It seems evident, then, that the root cause of alienation lies not in bilingualism itself but in the conflict of cultures. There seems to be no necessary or inevitable conflict between the languages of a bilingual person in the event that he or she is successfully acculturated. The implication, then, appears to be that cultural self-identification governs language proficiency rather than is determined by it. The fully bilingual appears to be those who enjoy cultural equilibrium – who accept and feel secure in both cultures to which they are heir. It seems likely that Child's adolescent Italo-Americans lacked this cultural equilibrium; in seeking to assimilate into the dominant American culture, they may have rejected their Italian heritage. Inability to achieve satisfactory assimilation could lead to a withdrawal into the minority-culture or an embittered rejection of both. Similar behaviour patterns have been widely observed and commented upon, for example among Asian immigrants into the UK and among Australian aborigines. It is worth noting, it seems, that the problems observed in Malay students, examined above, were not a feature of Tatar bilinguals. Where symptoms of withdrawal, identity crisis, excessive religiosity occurred, these could often be attributed to stress induced by anxiety over academic performance and a sense of personal inadequacy to cope with the demands and expectations imposed by the course. That this was not primarily a problem of bilingualism may be adduced by the fact that identical behaviour patterns were commonly observed among Malay students in Malaysian universities where language, at least, is not a factor.

In view of all this, it would appear that a balanced bicultural education is the key to bilingualism without crises of identity and suchlike side-effects. A wise policy would be to promote one's self-perception as that of a versatile, highly developed individual, with a

speech competence realized in various cultural and linguistic environments, which of course would highly estimate the role of multilingualism in self-identification.

ENDNOTES

[1] One of the problems besetting any discussion of the subject of bilingualism is the fact that there is no universally accepted definition of what precisely bilingualism is. In this paper, we are primarily concerned with bilingualism as a personal attribute, with an awareness that the term is often used loosely to refer to what Weinreich long ago more properly called multilingualism (Weinreich 1953), thus we intend to use it in the meaning "having or speaking two or more languages".

[2] An intractable problem of definition concerns the supposition that an individual has to have an excellent command of both languages in order to be rated bilingual. This issue was discussed extensively by Baetens Beardsmore (1982) in a wide-ranging review of scholarly opinion, from what he terms the "minimalist" definition to the "maximalist". The "minimalist" position we take to be the one that describes bilingualism as an ability of the L1 speaker to produce complete meaningful utterances in L2. At the other end of the spectrum, there is the ability to function equally well in either language in all situations and without interference from one language to the other; in which case, as Baetens Beardsmore points out, there might be very few 'true' bilinguals around. The commonest (and, arguably, common sense) view of what bilingualism is implies that, at the very least, the speaker will be able to conduct all the activities of daily life, public and private, formal and informal, in the appropriate register, in either language according to situation, which we will keep to here.

[3] A no-man's land, neither belonging wholly here nor wholly there; personal disorientation, anxiety caused by social isolation (Baetens Beardsmore 1977) – we may add, closely connected to the language use.

[4] Koo Yew Lie, for instance, mentions such issues as "tensions for the multilingual learner, where various literacies are accommodated, nativised and transformed within the intersection and contradictions of community, national and global discourses" (2006, p.79). This is only a part of the challenge that faces most bilinguals in the modern world.

[5] Children of mixed marriages face a cultural dichotomy that was not of their choice or making and their preferences may not be reciprocated by the societies to which they gravitate. In Tatarstan it is the case that the family resides in the home-country of both partners, but whose language will the children consider their mother-tongue? To bring them up bilingually or not is often a conscious decision; the children may not require to be bilingual in the same way as the children of an immigrant couple. However, this decision can be taken as evidence of the strength of the link between language and identity, for it usually springs from the natural desire of the Tatar parent to ensure a shared identity with his / her children; to ensure that they have a part in the community from which one has sprung as well as the one into which they were born. However, without the support of a larger linguistic community, bilingualism is less likely to persist than amongst immigrant groups. The children of such marriages may share many of the characteristics – and the problems – of second generation immigrants.

[6] As Seyyed Hatam Tamimi Sa'd and Sima Modirkhameneh (2015) point out, in language classes there is a tendency to prefer the pronunciation of native speakers of a language over all other versions as a more legitimate and correct one. This "native speakerism" may be subdued if a language learner realizes that everyone who speaks English has a more or less distinctive accent, which was demonstrated by Bernard Shaw in his famous play. These accents may in no way detract from the quality of one's English, but on the contrary, add uniqueness and peculiarity to one's way of speaking – exactly what forms one's identity, alongside with the feeling of unity with all those who share these languages.

[7] Whilst the bilingualism of second generation offspring of migrants may be very "complete" – i.e. they function equally well in either language – it is also commonly a transient phenomenon, unlikely to persist into subsequent generations. Much, of course, in this regard depends upon the size, homogeneity, socio / cultural sense of identity and cohesion, political and economic strengths of the immigrant community within its host society. Stronger ethnic, religious or cultural differentiation may retard or even prevent this process of assimilation and lead to a prolongation of second generation linguistic and cultural characteristics.

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