

## Contemporary Approaches to Multiculturalism in Relation with Multilingualism

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### Abstract

Multiculturalism is a study which studies cultural diversities. Each culture aspires to preserve identity and cooperate in agreement with outer world. Multiculturalism has undergone changes and it even became part of political approaches. Without correct communication the main purpose of multiculturalism, respect of diversity, cannot be achieved. Language is a main tool of communication acquisition of which is the respect of background culture as well.

**Keywords:** Communication, English, *linguae francae*, multiculturalism, multilingualism

### Introduction

Contemporary world is no longer a unit having strict borders among countries concentrated more on self-reliance. Modern world is much more concerned about preservation of their identity, traditions, living style applicable to their culture along with the tight cooperation with other nations with the respect of their cultural background. Multiculturalism is the concept that acknowledge of existence of different cultures and shows the respect towards them. Multiculturalism cannot be discussed without multilingualism as a few cultures share a language. The main characteristic of cultures is language that encompasses cultural features sometimes totally incapable for translation.

### Approaches to Multiculturalism

Development of multiculturalism and soft relation with other cultures has its history. Multiculturalism developed mainly from the anthropological viewpoint that none of the cultures are better or worse, they are simply different. This idea was first developed by Franz Boas in the beginning of the 20th century. (Wikipedia) However, multiculturalism a term was introduced relatively late carrying different meaning, focused more about racial difference rather than cultural. Firstly, "multicultural" was used in 1935 in the American Journal of Sociology (Edelstein, 2005). The terminology referred to the problems of the person of mixed race. The main problem seemed to be assimilation as minority groups were expected to do the most melting, therefore, the majority was not expected to do any adjustment to the others. The other early use of multiculturalism appeared in 1941 in New York Herald Tribune Books review. Here "multicultural" was used as an opposite of nationalism

and to assumptions of cultural homogeneity (Edelstein, 2005).

Concept of multiculturalism has undergone several changes. Initially multiculturalism was more focused on the racial and ethnical difference. Gradually it embodied the features important for the coexistence of cultures. So the issues like gender, religion, communication style, customary behaviors, cultural assumptions and values are the part of multicultural studies. One of the main features is a linguistic difference as well. However linguistic difference cannot be very deeply discussed in multicultural studies as it needs further investigations and deep knowledge of the language to understand the influence of language on the culturally accepted behavior.

Development of multicultural studies was greatly influenced by the movements in 1960s and 1970s. Anti-Vietnam War movement, free speech movement, black power movement, the women's movement, hippie culture caused tremendous changes not from the political standpoint but from the cultural and individual perspectives. The eruption of new approach towards multiculturalism in 1960s should not consider be the new discovery of the modern world. Multiculturalism is mainly acknowledgement of difference and perpetuation of the identity and the features that make it perfect. Edelstein argues that the western obsession of identity did not started with the scholars in the 20th century buy the tendency was visible in the ancient times and the initiator were Plato and Aristotle.

Multiculturalism used to consider white as a dominant race and the superiority of majority's rules. However modern tend is that multiculturalism represents white as one of the races that remedied the inequality in the study.

Multiculturalism is not just the field of education. The

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concern about the identity is so great that multiculturalism has become the part of the policy and political approach. The modern tendency is that countries paying less tolerance of multiculturalism seem to be less appealing by the global society. Existence of global society needs to find the ways to live in harmony in diversity. Development of multiculturalism and its involvement in political issues is one of the challenging and delicate issues. The extent of multiculturalism and readiness of its approval can define the national policy. "Multiculturalism is a controversial word in many countries, and it is often used as a movement theme, and sometimes as a political weapon" (Kajita, 1995).

The USA is the country oriented to the multicultural approach as a policy and the main that carries any importance is individual performance. The USA values the people because of their abilities to do something useful, clever and meaningful. Praise and state support of individual performance grants freedom of action to people which is very alluring. Active and open people do more to make others excite and involve in their deeds and interests as well. Due to that their constant aspiration to communication they create the demand of existence of common language for establishment of business deals especially. Business is an activity targeted to make money, so the knowledge of other languages is one of the tools to save money and achieve more progress with fewer expenses.

Georgia is very heterogeneous country having long experience of living with people of different cultural background. Georgian are really proud of ancient culture and the exhibition of cultural varieties is a great pleasure. The country is very traditional and small and prefers assimilation of culturally different people in order to lessen influence of multiculturalism over the customary behavior. However, people are very open, active and sociable, due to that country does not suffer from the lack of individual performance. The governmental support of individual performance is not as high as in the USA but freedom of action is gifted to everyone. That is the thing that creates fruitful environment for the development of various aspects along with the understanding and respect of multiculturalism.

Multiculturalism can make its contribution in solving terrorism problem. Terrorism is the use of violence to achieve a political goal appeared widely in the 20th century by the emergence of different radical groups aiming to devastate states and terror human being in order to establish new order in the world. Terrorism made the world to rethink the relationship issues the security of the population more than they used to be. Terrorism is also the thing which makes the people to rethink the approach towards the country or the group of people who try to terror the world. The great awakening was the September 11 when the world saw that clashes of cultures and polarization of debates are too deep and further measures should be taken in order to raise apprehension, appreciation and acceptance of diversity. Maintaining equality in multicultural studies and expansion of its availability will be one of the positive step in elimination of terrorism.

## Relation with Multilingualism

Full understanding of multiculturalism and harmonic co-existence in diversity is needs proper communication. Communication is closely connected with the process of civilization. Initial stage of interaction was speech, appearance of sounds conveying shared meaning. After that comes visual communication, pictographs: illustrations on the walls of caves. It was followed by the creation of alphabet and attempts of written communication that was assumed the most stable mean of communication enabling people to preserve information and to transform it as well. Discovery of printing press equipped humanity with more opportunities to keep and share information. It was beneficial time for people to raise recognition and attract attention. Starts of technological advancement in communication had a great impact on development of society and cooperation as well. Development of graphic, photography, cinematography, electrographic, electrophonic and current digital progress opened new ways of increasing cultural awareness and operation area. Evidently all society has history of communication and each of them tried to keep their past experience and pass it to generations with the help of communication. Moran mentions that "all human communication is founded upon our language-structured ability" (Moran, 2010) that helps humans to understand and perceive the world and to create new techniques and technologies of communication that is a great help for preservation and sharing gathered experiences.

Aspiration towards the tight communication and mutual cooperation in order to create something new and beneficial emerged the importance of knowledge of foreign languages. Study of the new language is not only the ability to master the language but it is also getting the notion of the cultural background of the language. Each language reflects the perception of the reality usual for certain society, it reflects perception of environment such as colors and weather, attitude towards people, gender and interaction such as using negative language.

A good basis for the acquisition of the new language is the mother tongue itself. Knowledge of a certain language makes it easy to study another as it provides some clues useful for second language acquisition. The modern concern is the number of languages what a person is capable to study. Apetauer & Shaw argue that a person is capable to study three or four languages and that should not be seen as a special gift of a person. They classify the languages from the prospect of a language learner and draw distinctions between languages for human encounters, fundamental languages, languages as *linguae francae* and "open-up" languages (Apetauer & Shaw, 1993). Languages for human encounters is the first language taught in a playful context under informal or formal conditions the main purpose of which is to establish communication. Fundamental language is a first foreign language offered to pupils. Language as *linguae francae* is a language that enables people of completely different cultural or linguistic back-

ground to communicate and be available for the majority opportunities of the world. "Open-up" languages are the ones which provide the learner not only with new sounds and structural and operational systems but it opens new remote cultures to them. Nowadays almost every person knows at least two languages. The availability of language has risen considerably via technologies. So some people master the elementary units of other language without a formal education.

The great importance is granted to linguafrancae nowadays. That is a tool that enables people establish communication with considerably different part of the world. English is assumed to be the leading language for international communication and the main reason is usually stated the extent of area the English is used but it is not totally true. English is not the language used for the majority of people. There are some other languages which are used by more people. These are Chinese, more precisely mandarin Chinese, Hindi and Arabic. The other reason of popularity English is economical and educational significance. However areas using the other widely spoken languages are not insignificant in economic and educational terms. (Apetauer & Shaw, 1993) My opinion towards the total inclination to English is first of all simplicity of language, its wide availability via technology and active promotion of English by the native states and their aspiration to be as helpful as possible in the acquisition of language. That action is not only profitable for rising awareness, popularity, attentiveness of English speaking areas which attracts interests and consequently the tourist that flourishes countries and emerges desire to study more, but it also opens opportunities to do something, be more flexible or trendy, open to novelties that is great pedestal of career advancement.

## Conclusion

Multiculturalism is a product of people's coexistence and cooperation that is one of the most complex and interesting phenomena of the world. The development of multiculturalism is the development of the collaboration of the people and the struggle for equality and identification. Multiculturalism is not just study of cultural diversity, but it is opportunity to change the viewpoint of the world along with multilingualism. Multilingualism is an attainment of globalization that promoted importance of communication and knowledge of languages as well. Acquisition of a new language is not just study of certain forms usable in specific conditions. But a new language opens new world, new patterns of thinking that has influence on the original one. People with correct understanding and great appreciation of multiculturalism and multilingualism cannot be intolerant to heterogeneity. Further development of multiculturalism will pave the way to progress of multilingualism, broad-mindedness and convenience of consensus.

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