

ATTITUDES TOWARDS USING ENGLISH AND RUSSIAN AS LANGUAGES OF INSTRUCTION

Akhmadjonov Khasan Akhmadjanovich

University of World Economy and Diplomacy, Associate Professor

ABSTRACT

The language of education has taken the attention of many stakeholders in recent years. In many countries, the use of language to teach academic subjects is different. In Central Asia, parents, students and academicians prefer Russian. In Turkey, elite universities have been teaching subjects through English. In Iran, students also opt for studying in English. The literature review has revealed that students prefer not to choose their first language as language of education due to some reasons. In this article, I will explore the factors for this matter.

Keywords: *bilingual, monolingual, English language, EMI (English Medium Instruction)*

Introduction

The role of English as an internal language is undeniable. It is not used in all aspects of life. The governments of countries in developing countries have been paying much attention to learning it and promoting its use in all spheres of life. Now, some schools and universities choose English as a language of education. For example, at the university where I work, teachers of economics, management, calculus, etc. are encouraged to teach in English. In Uzbekistan, new private schools and private universities are offering education in English. Russian is also widely promoted language in schools. Parents would like to see their children Russian language instruction schools.

Literature review

Kiavar and Yaghoubi-Notash (2019) studies the attitudes of learners who are bilingual and monolingual to some issues including American English, British English, their cultures, etc. The findings indicate that the views of learners are different. Bilingual learners consider learning English easier and think that it is necessary to learn other foreign languages. They also think, English, to be the language of instruction and it should take the status of official language in Iran. On the other hand, monolingual learners find English to be difficult language to learn. They do not think English is an important valuable language. English for them is the language that only the Americans and the British use to communicate and these nations have the right to own it, while bilinguals think it is their language. Moreover, monolingual learners would consider to learn one particular variety of English rather than learning International English. The study (Kiavar and Yaghoubi-Notash, 2019) emphasizes that learning languages gives ownership and better understanding of a culture. According to the study (Kiavar and Yaghoubi-Notash, 2019), the attitudes of monolingual speakers are quite more negative than those of bilinguals. The authors point out that English should be learned regardless its variety or any other concern. It is not the language of one nation, rather it is the language of everybody.

Şahan and Sahan (2021) conducted a qualitative study at the undergraduate level of the university to examine the motivations and beliefs of students regarding EMI engineering programs. The student participants were grouped into monolingual (full) and bilingual (partial) EMI (English-medium instruction) programs. The results revealed big differences in students' motivations and beliefs. The students' beliefs concerning English as academic lingua franca differed across two EMI programs. The students in monolingual EMI programs expressed their willingness to study subjects in English-only instruction by explaining that this will help them to find jobs and work for international companies where they can get higher salaries. Also, they said that studying in English would increase their confidence as future engineers and this will lead to more achievements in their professional life. The results showed

more optimistic views of full EMI programs. However, the students in partial EMI programs showed their willingness to pursue postgraduate studies after graduating universities. Another interesting fact about full EMI programs is that top universities in Turkey have historically used English as a means of instruction. This is believed to be a motivation for students to enroll in elite universities with their top entrance exam scores.

In the 1990s the former Soviet Union lost its dominance in Central Asia and independent states began promoting their ethnic languages (Bekmurzaev, 2019). Particularly, dramatic reforms in education have been implemented in Uzbekistan. Currently it can be seen that many schools offer education both in Uzbek and Russian language instruction. There are schools with mixed Uzbek and Russian language education or Uzbek-only state schools (Khalikov, 2006). The schools with purely Russian-only does not exist in Uzbekistan except those private schools.

In Central Asian countries, now there is a trend to educating children in Russian language instruction in schools or at universities because parents strongly believe that this will ensure bright future for their children. According to Khalikov (2006), Uzbek parents would like to see their children to study in the Russian language education. The results from the study conducted in Kyrgyz university, students opted for Russian-language instruction groups as they believe that they are concerned about their bright future (Gul, 2019). Moreover, the study (Gul, 2019) revealed that Kyrgyz students preferred to study in Russian for some reasons: study materials are not ample in their ethnic language; as college graduates, they are normally interviewed in Russian by employers; students with the Russian language command will have more privilege over their peers; their friends, parents, and neighbors speak Russian fluently so they are put under pressure to the Russian language; academicians, teachers, and other stakeholders had taken Russian education so they would also choose Russian to communicate; Russian is an official language in Kyrgyzstan, thus it is a must to be fluent in this language.

Akhmadjonov (2023) explains his views on students' performance in two types of language instruction classes. At the public university where he teaches, students can take education either in Russian or Uzbek. Interestingly, students in both groups are different in many aspects. For example, the students in Russian language instruction classes are characterized as being more democratic, independent, critical thinkers and have higher IQ than students in Uzbek language instruction classes. He interviewed some teachers at the university to find out the reasons for big differences in these classes. In the former type of class (Russian), students at schools had been taught more of Russian literature, more reading activities, Russian language, and culture. The former Soviet Union traits are still present in Russian language instruction schools.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that education is paramount for the welling of a country. For this reason, quality education must be guaranteed. New teaching methods along with correct and appropriate teaching in the proper language is required. English and Russian language are key for success if they are taught when children are young. Education should be in the language which is native to learners. Governments ought to make decision on the language of education to meet the needs of students and future of the country.

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