

SCTCMG 2018

International Scientific Conference «Social and Cultural Transformations in the Context of Modern Globalism»

DEVELOPMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNERS' VALUE SYSTEM IN MULTILINGUAL URBAN ENVIRONMENT

T.S. Vershinina, (a), M.O. Guzikova, (b), O.L. Kocheva (c)*

*Corresponding author

(a) Ural Federal University named after the First President of Russia B.N. Yeltsin, 19, Mira street, Ekaterinburg, Russia

(b) Ural Federal University named after the First President of Russia B.N. Yeltsin, 19, Mira street, Ekaterinburg, Russia

(c) Ural Federal University named after the First President of Russia B.N. Yeltsin, 19, Mira street, Ekaterinburg, Russia,

Abstract

The article discusses the impact of growth of territory's international activity on the transformation of the value system of students studying foreign languages. A city is considered as an example of such territory. The article states that the growth of the territory's foreign economic activity leads to the emergence of a multilingual space. Conditions influencing development of a multilingual urban environment are analyzed. In turn, the multilingual landscape of the city becomes the environment in which development of the students' value system occurs, as they seek to acquire foreign language competencies to use them in their professional activities. The article argues that the multilingual urban landscape affects the value system of foreign language learners. The article considers the case of the city of Ekaterinburg. During the past decades it has transformed from a city that was closed for foreigners until 1992 into one of the largest regional centers of international business activity in Russia. The article presents analysis of results of the empirical sociological study of the value system that was carried out in 2017-2018 among the first-year students of the Linguistics direction of Ural Federal University: stable and changeable value paradigms are identified, as well as the main reasons are established in focus groups and lead to the value opposition. This analysis allows concluding that there is a correlation between changes in the value system of foreign language learners and the multilingual urban environment at the initial stage of the professional development of students.

© 2019 Published by Future Academy www.FutureAcademy.org.UK

Keywords: Value system, foreign language, learners, multilingual.



The Author(s) 2019. This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

The 21st century was not only the beginning of a new millennium, it also symbolized the beginning of a new stage of changes in the world economy and international economic relations. Globalization brings to the fore the development of international cooperation. The growth rate of the international trade leads to the transformation both of such large economic centers as global cities and of those that are distant from the current financial and shopping centers of the regions. The international relations increasingly filled with the economic content determine the regional systems development leading to an increase in the internationalization of the regions (Kochetov, 2011) and, ultimately, to the modification of the regional communities involved in the globalization process as well as their cultural patterns, employment practices, education etc. The international and foreign economic life of the Russian regions that is concentrated in their million-plus cities is nothing but a reflection of these territories' involvement in globalization processes with the resulting development problems and prospects. This involvement has an external manifestation that is designated in the article with the help of the term "multilingual and multicultural urban environment", it is an educational environment that forms the ideas about the professional prospects and values of future professionals.

2. Problem Statement

The article will consider the extent to which the processes of a region's internationalization affect the values system of students studying foreign languages. The analysis is based on the conviction that values are developed under the conditions of the urban environment; the development of a multilingual and multicultural urban space is reflected in the students' value system. It is argued that in Ekaterinburg under the influence of the policy of developing the region's and the regional center international activity a multilingual urban landscape is being formed, which becomes an educational environment for its residents, in particular, those studying in universities (Gregory & Williams, 2000). The process of globalization leads to the multilingualism growth, which is caused by such factors as the need for communication between people of different cultures and countries. Increasingly intensive international and supranational contacts dictate the need for the language support and the English language is becoming quite widespread (Steyaert, Ostendorp & Gaibrois, 2011).

The territory's internationalization is not only manifested in the dynamics of the majority of macroeconomic parameters indicating its external economic situation, it is manifested primarily in changes of the urban space, such as opening of foreign enterprises representative offices, holding large-scale exhibitions with foreign participation and other so-called mega-events (Müller, 2017). It should be noted that in a city like Ekaterinburg these changes are more visible, since until 1992 it was closed to foreigners. After these restrictions were lifted, Ekaterinburg adhered to the strategy of "aggressive" internationalization: in a short time, the diplomatic missions of a large number of foreign states were opened, which are still active today. Later, at the beginning of the 21st century a policy of conducting mega-events was introduced, including summit meetings, major international exhibitions such as Innoprom, UralExpoArms, etc. The logical consequence of this policy was the decision to add Ekaterinburg to the list of the cities that hosted the 2018 World Cup.

During several decades Ekaterinburg having been a closed city transformed into the center of the international activity, which ultimately allowed making an application for its inclusion in the number of applicants for Expo 2020 hosts. And although Ekaterinburg lost to Dubai in this competition it did not shake its self-confidence: another application was filed which is still awaiting a decision. Globalization trends led to a change of the identity paradigm of the Sverdlovsk region. For a long period, it being the industrial center of the country, a part of the Urals – its reference region, had been developed mainly as a construct oriented “inside” the country to ensure the state’s defense. Currently, while remaining an industrial region, Ekaterinburg is gaining competencies that are characteristic of the economy 4.0. D. Moravec calls the people creating the Fourth Industrial Revolution “knowmads”. In his book *Knowmad Society* Moravec describes them as creative, enterprising people with good imagination who can work in different environments (Moravec, 2013).

The urban linguistic space in Ekaterinburg makes it clear that even familiar businesses can be treated inventively. The urban space of Ekaterinburg is characterized by such phenomena as the active usage of foreign languages in inscriptions, names, signs and so on, a language game leading to new meanings, including the use of English. In the center of Ekaterinburg one can easily meet foreigners speaking different languages or see announcements about events having an international context. Ultimately, the presence of all these elements in the urban language environment suggests that the city sees itself as one of the centers of globalization. Being a city with a high level of human capital, Ekaterinburg strives to increase the students’ language competence in both formal and non-formal education. The language situation in Ekaterinburg gives reason to state that the urban environment itself is a factor that motivates learning languages and setting goals, the achievement of which is mediated by language competences. Such goals include the desire to get or continue education abroad, move to the centers of global activity, complete internships in other countries, etc. The involvement in the multicultural and multilingual environment occurs in the city, therefore, the international mobility does not seem to be extraordinary.

The social characteristics of the multilingual environment are important in understanding the intercultural communication processes in the region that promotes international cooperation. In this regard, the issues of the development of the human capital communicative competences in the region, the value content of the educational process influencing the formation of its multilingual environment become very urgent. The process of globalization is reflected in the transformation of the value systems of foreign languages learners, especially English learners, as it is this language that is recognized as a modern lingua franca (Crystal, 2012). The development of communicative competences occurs under the influence both of the process of mastering the language and of the ethnocultural environment in which this mastering takes place, thus, this environment is of great importance for the conceptualization of the surrounding reality.

3. Research Questions

Considering the above mentioned information, this article is an attempt to establish the relationship between the changes of the value system of foreign language students in Ekaterinburg and the multilingual landscape of the city. There is a hypothesis that the mega-events that took place in Ekaterinburg in 2018, and above all, the 2018 FIFA World Cup affected the change in the value system of those learning a foreign language, as they catalyzed the appearance of the English inscriptions in the city, the restaurant menus in

foreign languages, announcements in public transport in English, as well as the appearance of a large number of foreigners in the city. If it is true, then the internationalization of the urban space affects the ideas related to the purpose of mastering foreign languages. In this case, it can be argued that the urban environment becomes a multilingual and multicultural education environment. In the situation when multilingualism becomes a component of the visual world around a person, on the one hand, he begins to consider it the norm, and on the other hand, it opens up wider prospects for his future.

It should be noted that the 2018 World Cup was not the only one, although probably the largest event that attracted foreigners to Ekaterinburg as a part of sports tourism. Ekaterinburg attracts mainly business tourists, whose routes in the city are limited to venues, hotels and restaurants of the middle and highest price categories. In these places their presence is also felt by the residents of the city, and, primarily, by those who study at universities, whom the organizers of events employ as volunteers for the linguistic support of foreigners.

The World Cup attracted large groups of foreigners who not only attended the matches of their national teams, but also got to know the city and its inhabitants. The event of this scale and the holiday atmosphere that accompanied it attracted everyone's attention and mobilized a large number of people to communicate with foreigners. More than two thousand volunteers participated in the organization of the games in Ekaterinburg, the preparation for this event took more than two years. It can be said that a group of professional volunteers has been formed, whose language level and communication skills also influence the development of a multilingual urban space.

4. Purpose of the Study

In order to understand how the urban multilingual and multicultural environment influences the values of foreign language learners, it is necessary to explore the value systems that determine the mastering of foreign languages by the students of the major Linguistics, who choose foreign languages as the main goal of their studies at the university. This article is an attempt to identify the basic value systems of linguistic students. Value systems or paradigms are one of the main categories of the theory of human behavior determination. The study of values, according to E. Durkheim, is determined by the fact that value appears due to its influence on a collective, not an individual subject (Durkheim, 1995). The subject accepts values formed to the definite degree in the process of joint activity. Thus, the values associated with the knowledge of foreign languages are determined by the meanings created in the environment. M. Weber points out that value is a norm that has a certain significance for a social subject (Weber, 1990). There is a special system of interaction between the values developed by the society and those adopted by specific individuals in the process of socialization. T. Parsons noted that values play a leading role in the fulfillment of the social systems function of preserving and reproducing a sample, since they are nothing but ideas about the desired type of the social system that regulate the processes of taking certain obligations by the subjects (Parsons, 2005). Adoption of the values of the certain community occurs in the process of developing value paradigms. Value paradigms are the main channel of assimilating the spiritual culture of society, turning cultural values into incentives and motives for the practical behavior of people (Inglehart, 2015). Out of the whole totality of values existing in the society a person chooses those of them that, in his opinion, lead to the satisfaction of his needs and interests. Value paradigms are associated with interests,

representing a form of their development by including them in the search for a set of stable criteria for identifying the most appropriate options of obtaining and mastering necessary items (Merenkov, 2003).

For a future professional the multilingual and multicultural environment of the city having the strategy of internationalization is an environment, which largely determines the choice of his/her value systems. The educational space of the university, which, thanks to internationalization, turns into a place of communication between people of different cultures and different languages, also influences this choice. The spread of the English language as a language of international communication shows the students that in the modern world the knowledge of English opens up opportunities for applying their skills both in the local space and abroad.

It should be noted that the value systems of students in a multilingual society have not yet become the subject of study by the Russian sociologists and sociolinguists to the full extent, despite the fact that in the modern world multilingualism is the norm, not the exception. In the Soviet times, sociocultural aspects of bi-and multi-lingualization were studied by such sociolinguists as M.M. Mikhailov (Mikhailov, 1988), E.M. Vereshchagin and V.G. Kostomarov (Vereshchagin & Kostomarov, 1990), Zh.T. Toshchenko (Toshchenko, 2001). In the foreign studies the works on the motivation to learn foreign languages dominate. Within the framework of the education sociology there is a study of orientations based on meta-analysis from Gardner's pattern (Gardner, 1985). Clément and Kruidenier developed a scale of orientations in which the following alternatives were defined: instrumental orientation (having mastered a foreign language I will get a better paid job), knowledge orientation (I will get knowledge), orientation related to travelling and acquiring friends (thanks to the foreign language knowledge I can make new friends) (Clément & Kruidenier, 1983). In their studies the researchers note the symbolic capital of the English language knowing of which, in the opinion of students, will ensure a higher social status. This type of research is based on the theoretical model of P. Bourdieu, who explains the preferences in the study of various languages in terms of their symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1993).

5. Research Methods

The value systems of those who study foreign languages as the main subject were studied in the course of a two-year cycle of the empirical sociological research. In 2017 and 2018 the first-year bachelors of Ural Federal University with the major Linguistics were monitored regarding the values they associate with the prospects of its future use after the graduation. In accordance with the federal educational standard of the major of bachelor degree 45.03.02 "Linguistics", the objects of the professional activities of graduates are: "theory of foreign languages; theory and methods of teaching foreign languages and cultures; theory of cross-cultural communication; linguistic components of electronic information systems; foreign languages and cultures of the countries of the studied languages ". During the course, students learn three foreign languages, the first one they studied previously, the second one is chosen in the first year and the second one – in the third year.

In 2017 78 freshmen were interviewed by shift survey, in 2018 the number was 88 people. At the same time, there were 127 answers in 2017, and 144 answers in 2018. The results of the first survey were published in 2018 (Guzikova & Vershinina, 2018). The questionnaire with grid questions allowed revealing the respondents' own opinions, their ideas about the final results of mastering new languages and improving

English, as well as their plans of the future use of the professional knowledge after the graduation. The answers were given in the form of complete or incomplete sentences, word combinations. For their processing, a classifier was created, which made it possible to single out a typical opinion on the issues under consideration. To interpret the results obtained, the focus groups were held in 2018 (each consisting of up to 8 participants), their purpose was to interpret the results obtained in the course of the written questionnaire.

6. Findings

The result of processing the personal data reveals that four value systems that respondents are guided by have developed: the desire to master foreign languages at a high level, the implementation of the desired employment, social mobility, and the opportunity of self-development (based on the knowledge of other cultures, traditions, and customs of different nations).

Table 01. The results of the survey.

year/number of respondents	Question	Total number of answers (total number/ % of the total amount)				Total amount of answers
		desire to master a foreign language at a high level	implementation of the desired employment	social mobility	self- development opportunity	
2017/74	How do you imagine your future after the graduation?	36/28	57/49	24/19	10/8	127
2018/88	How do you imagine your future after the graduation?	12/8	75/52	46/31	11/7	144

The survey results show that, compared with 2017, in 2018 the number of responses that contain a reference to such a value paradigm as mobility sharply increased. At the same time, such value as mastering a foreign language decreased. The percentage of the data indicating such values as finding a job and the possibility of personal growth are slightly different from the 2017 level. Thus, it can be stated that some values remain unchanged, while the relevance of the others falls or increases. The focus groups that followed the survey suggested that the growth of such value as mobility (it included work abroad, travelling, foreign internships, moving to the capital cities of Russia, etc.), was due to the fact that the focus groups participants were “impressed by the fact that people move freely” (it was said about the fans of the World Cup 2018), “many foreigners come to us, but little stay here” (opinion about the participants of the Innoprom exhibition), “languages give possibility to see what is going on in the world”, “I think I can find a job not only in Ekaterinburg”, “a lot of events are going on, I also want to be a part of them”, and so on.

7. Conclusion

The given studies showed that the value of learning and mastering foreign languages by the first-year students choosing the linguistic education is considered in the multilingual context that is being formed in Ekaterinburg as a response to the growth of international activity. The language competencies are regarded, first of all, as a means of achieving the goals related to successful employment, material security, raising social status, and not of developing professionalism based on a deep study of the language development history, the spiritual culture of its native speakers. Moreover, 2018 studies show that a high level of proficiency in a foreign language loses its priority compared to 2017. It also shows the increased pragmatic attitude towards a foreign language, the possession of which is considered not as a self-sufficient value, but as a means of achieving such goals as employment and social mobility. It is also affected by the fact that most of the bachelor students are aware that their vocational education will be continued in the form of internships and further education at the master's level.

The monitoring materials of the first year bachelor students of the major Linguistics showed that the leading value of a foreign language for them was the ability to use it to solve the employment problems and ensure the improvement of their social status. The importance of the foreign language mastery as a condition of a deeper understanding of the culture of the country for which it is national, turned out to be insignificant. The utilitarian approach to the professional acquisition of languages was dominant.

It appears that in the course of the study it was possible to establish a mediated connection between the multilingual environment that arose in the city during its international activity, which reached its apogee in Ekaterinburg during the 2018 World Cup, and the development of the value systems of foreign languages learners. This study allows concluding that the city becomes the environment in which the value orientations of students in general, and students of foreign languages as future professionals, in particular, are developed.

Acknowledgments

The study was carried out with the support of Grant RFBR №17-29-09136/18.

References

- Bourdieu, P. (1993). Social Space and Symbolic Power. *THESIS: theory and history of economic and social institutions and systems*, 2, 137 – 150.
- Clément, R., Kruidenier, B.G. (1983). Orientations in Second Language Acquisition: I. The Effects of Ethnicity, Milieu and Target Language on Their Emergence. *Language Learning*, 33, 272–291.
- Crystal, D. (2012). *A Global Language. English in the World*. New York, Open University.
- Durkheim, E. (1995). *Sociology. Its Subject, Method and Mission*. Moscow, Canon.
- Gardner, R. C. (1985). *Social Psychology and Second Language Learning*. London, Arnold.
- Gregory, E., Williams, A. (2000). *City Literacies: Learning to Read across Generations and Cultures*. London, Routledge.
- Guzikova, M.O., Vershinina, T.S. (2018). The Value of Future Linguists' Proficiency in a Foreign Language: the Experience of Empirical Research. *Proceedings of Ural Federal University. Series 3. Social Sciences*, 3(179), 134-142.
- Inglehart, R. (2015). *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles among Western Publics*. Princeton University Press.
- Kochetov, E. (2011) *Dialogue: Dialogistics as the Science of the Fate of Man and the World in the Context of Global Change*. Moscow, Ekonomika.

- Merenkov, A.V. (2003) *System of Determination of Human Activity*. Ekaterinburg. Publishing house of the Ural Mining and Geological Academy. Bank of cultural information.
- Mikhailov, M.M. (1988) Bilingualism in the Modern World. Cheboksary, Chuvash State University.
- Nikolsky, L.V. (1968) Language Policy as a Form of the Conscious Impact of Society on Language Development. *Language and society*, 4, 35-47.
- Moravec, J.W. (2013). *Knowmad Society*. Minneapolis: Education Futures.
- Müller, M. (2017). Approaching Paradox: Loving and Hating Mega-Events. *Tourism Management*, 63, 234-241.
- Parsons, T. (2005). *The Social System*. 2nd ed. Routledge sociology classics.
- Steyaert, C., Ostendorp, A., Gaibrois, C. (2011). Multilingual Organizations as ‘Linguascapes’: Negotiating the Position of English through Discursive Practices. *Journal of World Business*, 46, 3, 270-278.
- Toshchenko, Zh.T. (2001). *Paradoxical Person*. Moscow, Gardariki.
- Vereshchagin, E.M., Kostomarov, V.G. (1990) *Language and Culture: Country Studies in Teaching Russian as a Foreign Language*. Moscow, Yazyk.
- Weber, M. (1990). *Selected Writings*. Moscow, Progress.