

5 ICLEI 2016-91 Marzhan Thomas

## **Comparative Analysis of Theory and Practice behind Implementation of Multilingualism and Multilingual Education in the Netherlands and Kazakhstan**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The paper presents comparative analysis of implementation of bilingual/multilingual education in the Netherlands and Kazakhstan. The study explores the origin of multilingualism in Europe and USA, role of multilingualism for socio-economic development, relevant state, regional and international practices in bilingual/multilingual education, growth in English language use, trilingualism and main findings from research trips. Main differences and similarities between the two case study countries in implementation of bilingual/multilingual tuition are identified.

The term “polycultural” education is more common than “multicultural” in Russia and Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan is implementing multilingual education through integration to the world scientific and educational space. The importance of learning three languages – Kazakh, Russian and English – was emphasised on the state level. There are contextual differences between Dutch and Kazakhstani educational systems. In Kazakhstan, the state policy is to teach and learn three languages simultaneously and equally, while in the Netherlands, it is mostly bilingualism, which starts at primary and secondary education level, rather than at higher education level. Research trips to universities and secondary schools in the Netherlands were funded by the 2014 Bolashak fellowship. Research interviews with the major stakeholders and discussions with administration and faculty staff at Wageningen University, the Hague University of Applied Sciences and Dalton den Haag School revealed that bilingual tuition was mainly conducted at graduate studies level, while there were special multilingual groups at the undergraduate level. The driving force was to attract foreign students and develop advanced technologies. The Dutch higher education is inclined to technologies transfer by means of English language. The proportion and percentage of courses taught in Dutch and English vary in different universities.

*Keywords:* multilingualism, multilingual education, Kazakhstan, Netherlands, schools, universities, economy, state, English, policies, laws, regulations

### **Introduction**

The situation when an individual or a group of people use more than one language while interacting with other people is widely called as polylingualism, multilingualism and/or plurilingualism. These terms are derived from French “multilinguisme” and “plurilinguisme”, which were widely used in research since the 1950s (Cohen, 1956). The terms “multicultural” and “polycultural” education are used interchangeably as they differ primarily by linguistic origins (Latin «multum» and Greek «poly» both meaning “many”).

Multilingual education means using of at least three languages as means of instruction in education: first, the mother tongue, second, a regional or national language and, the third, an

international language (UNESCO, 2003). English language is often being used as a medium for international communication. English is the leading language of business, science and socio-economic development (Samuelson and Freedman, 2010). English has been the official language of the European Central Bank since 1998, with press conferences held in English, despite the fact that the United Kingdom has a special opt-out from the EU treaties and the Economic and Monetary Union (Dor, 2004).

In the USA multiethnic education was developed in response to demands to end racial discrimination, inequality, segregation and violence in the 1960s-1970s (Nieto, 1992). Over time, this trend in education was transformed into what is called multicultural education today. Multicultural education and multilingualism in the USA developed intensively during the so-called “Black Revolution” in the 1960s, which was accompanied by the civil rights movement and supported by the state laws to merge public schools for white and black students (e.g. the lawsuit “Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka”). Several American scholars supported multicultural and multilingual education as one of the fundamental principles of democratic society in the 1980s-2000s (Banks, 1999; Campbell, 2010; Glazer, 1997; Singh, 1998; Appiah, 1997; Buell, 1998). On the other hand, in some countries like Australia the concept of multilingualism is slowly losing its ground, although in the 1990s, it was on top of governmental agenda (Heugh, 2014).

### **Role of Multilingualism for Socio-Economic Development**

Multilingualism plays an essential role in socio-economic development. Duchene and Heller (2012) believe that multilingualism not only facilitates economic growth but also is a product of “new” economy, which is based on competitive production in a global system and economic organisation on a global scale. Transformation of economic systems from extracting raw materials to information and services is essential for many countries, especially Kazakhstan. Recent policies on higher education system in Kazakhstan (such as 2010 State Program for Education Development for 2011 – 2020) aim to contribute to economic innovations, raise quality of education and improve staff training (Lukashova *et al.*, 2015).

Speaking two, three or four languages is not uncommon for many Europeans (Baker, 2011). Speaking several languages not only increases opportunities for work and education within European Union, but also improves trade within Europe, and between Europe and the rest of the world (Smokotin, 2010; Tinsley, 2011). A recent survey across small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in European countries illustrated that many business opportunities were lost due to shortage of language skills, for example, 11% of respondents lost a contract due to a shortage of language competence, with an average business loss of €325,000 per enterprise over a three years period (Hagen *et al.*, 2006). English language was extensively used in SMEs, however, demand for other languages, such as Spanish, was greater than demand for English language skills. In addition, companies employing several languages, improved their export sales by 45% (Tinsley, 2011).

A number of policies supporting multilingual education for economic development were established in Europe. For example, the Lisbon Agenda (also known as Lisbon Strategy) was launched in 2000 with an aim to make the EU “the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy...” by embedding foreign language into general education system (Smokotin, 2010). This objective was further supported by European Council meeting in Barcelona in 2002, which aimed to make European training and education systems a “world quality reference” (European Commission, 2005).

### **Multilingualism around the Globe**

Currently, multilingualism is gaining support at all levels in ethnically heterogeneous countries of Europe (e.g. Belgium and Switzerland), Asia (e.g. Singapore and Malaysia), South Africa and the Commonwealth of the independent states (CIS). For example, multilingual education in the mother tongue (Russian) and foreign languages has been historically developed in many regions of Russia, such as Crimea and Republic of Sakha (Yakutia). Multilingualism issues were widely explored by a number of Russian scholars (Galskova, 2003; Baryshnikov, 2004; Evdokimova, 2008), who acknowledged the importance of cultural and linguistic diversity in a multicultural environment.

The main goal of multilingual education (MLE) is pursuit of social justice and equity. MLE unites different disciplines that come together through language and education, such as linguistics, psychology and education. MLE builds bridges between schools, cultures and countries without favouring one language over another, which helps to overcome monolingualism barriers. Three major principles of MLE are mother tongue instructions (MTI), support and/or revival of other languages and language transfer (Harrison, 2013).

In Russia and Kazakhstan the term "polycultural education" is more common than "multicultural". Kazakhstan began implementation of multilingual education and social modernisation through integration to the world scientific and educational space. Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev emphasised the importance of learning three languages – Kazakh, Russian and English – for training multilingual specialists in the country (Nazarbayev, 2012). In Kazakhstan, several researchers examined multilingual training within the "Trinity of languages" project and identified both theoretical framework and methodological principles for multilingual and vocational education (Zhetpisbayeva, 2009; Mazhitayeva et al., 2012). According to the State Program on Education Development for 2011-2020 and 2007 program on Trinity of Languages, by 2020 one hundred percent people in Kazakhstan shall speak Kazakh, 95% - shall speak Russian and 25% - shall speak English language.

### **MLE in Kazakhstan and its Comparison with MLE in the Netherlands**

Nowadays MLE is one of the priority trends of educational system development in Kazakhstan, supported by the Ministry of Education and Science in 2012. The development of MLE in Kazakhstan is based on a number of state decrees, such as the 1996 Language Policy Strategy, the 1997 Law on Languages, the 2001 State Program of Development and Functioning of Languages for 2011-2020 and the 2012 Strategy for Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan Until 2030. These policies aimed at integration of Kazakhstani education system into world educational and scientific community, transfer of technologies, improvement of intercultural communication and competitive advantage at international scale.

### **Differences between MLE of the Netherlands and Kazakhstan**

The analysis of the education system in Kazakhstan and the Netherlands revealed contextual differences between Dutch and Kazakhstani educational systems based on different historical, cultural, economic and educational structures and state policies (especially between centralised and decentralised systems). In Kazakhstan, the state policy is to teach and learn three languages simultaneously and on equal basis in the whole sector of higher education. In the Netherlands, it is mostly bilingualism (with the exception of Frisian language), which starts at primary and secondary education level, rather than at higher education level. Therefore, some educational

issues like education management, development of curriculum, methodology and leaning styles at university and secondary school levels are solved in a different way.

### **Similarities between MLE of the Netherlands and Kazakhstan**

There are, however, certain common features, justified by globalisation, education internationalisation and labour market development. For example, learning English as the language of education, business and technologies, teaching and learning of English in secondary schools, capacity building facilities of language training at linguistic centres of Kazakhstani universities are similar to Leiden University's Talencentrum/Academic Language Centre and Linguistic Centre. There is also a common issue of professional and career development for multilingual teachers in both countries. Therefore, the professional development units like Graduate School of Learning (ICLON) are organised at Kazakhstani universities and separately at the national level, e.g. Orleu – National Centre for Professional Development in Almaty city.

### **State regulation of MLE in the Netherlands**

The analysis of multilingualism and bilingualism in the Netherlands demonstrates the presence of state policy in this field until the 1990s; however, since then the situation has been changing. The European Commission, European Parliament, European Platform and Government of the Netherlands issued various state acts and resolutions, regulating the use of Dutch and English languages at different education levels. The most significant and explicit was the 1992 Law on Higher Education declaring that “Classes should be taught and exams should be offered in Dutch”, although there were two exceptions possible:

- a) when the teaching concerned the language in question,
- b) if the specific nature, the structure or the quality of the teaching, or otherwise the origin of the participants required such, conforming a code of conduct which has been established by the authorities” (Law on Higher Education, 1992). The “specific nature” of the education requires using a different language (for example, when books are only in English, or when there is a foreigner in the audience).

### **Growth in use of English language in the Netherlands**

As a result, nowadays about 80% of graduate level education in the Netherlands is conducted in English. Obviously, the Netherlands is a multilingual country as it hosts a number of minority languages, both local and those brought by immigration. On the other hand, the Netherlands is considered a bilingual rather than a multilingual country, where people use the native Dutch and the second English languages. There are several indications that the Dutch are moving from being a traditionally multilingual population, to being bilingual with their knowledge of English. The rise of English as an international “lingua franca” (i.e. common language or dialect used systematically for communication) is especially noticeable in the last decades. The 2006 Special Eurobarometer report for the European Commission noted that 87% of Dutch citizens speak English as a second language, while the average in the European Union was 38%. The percentage of the second language speakers of English in the Netherlands is very high, compared only with the Scandinavian countries. The status of English as an international “lingua franca” has become undeniable and the widespread bilingualism of the Dutch population means that many people have access to international cultural resources in English language, without giving up their own cultural heritage in return (Oostendorp, 2012).

### **Bilingual education in the Netherlands**

Bilingual education historically started with the Resolution of European Council “Plurilingual Education in Europe” (Strasbourg, 1969). The European Platform, an autonomous Dutch organisation mandated by the government, oversees the quality of bilingual education in the country by setting standards for bilingual schools and teachers. Currently bilingual education is successfully implemented at all education levels from primary schools to universities in the Netherlands. In fact, bilingual teaching starts at primary and secondary levels, rather than at higher education level. There were around 100 bilingual schools in 2007, 133 in 2011, 250 schools in 2013 (out of a total 6,913). In these schools, the first language (L1) was Dutch, whereas the second language (L2) was usually English (Kuiken and Linden, 2013).

### **Bilingualism at the Dutch secondary schools**

At present bilingual education is already very well established in the Netherlands, and many Dutch people speak English to a high standard and prefer to study in English. Most bilingual secondary schools are Bilingual Preparatory Scientific Education (TVWO) and Bilingual Higher General Secondary Education (THAVO). The following subjects are taught in English: Arts, Chemistry, Physics, Biology, Geography, Economics, Physical education, Drama, English, Mathematics, History, Music, Social sciences and Religious studies, but some variation may exist among schools (Oostendorp, 2012).

Dutch secondary schools practicing bilingual education offer part of their classes (e.g. Mathematics, Geography and Chemistry) in other languages. In 2011, this other language was English (in 132 schools) and German (1 school). Nowadays, a few dozen primary schools are also experimenting with teaching part of their classes in English. After six years of secondary schooling, Dutch students are supposed to be able to operate their language in question at level B1/B2 (according to the European reference scale), which means they should be able to use their language in question independently in everyday situations (Oostendorp, 2012).

### **Trilingualism at the Friesland secondary schools**

In the province of Friesland, which has its own official language, there are some trilingual primary schools, where children are taught in Dutch, Frisian and English. The 2013-2018 Administrative Agreement of Frisian Language and Culture contains a number of regulations aimed at stimulating the Frisian language and culture, specifically in the fields of education, media and culture (Nusche, 2014).

### **Higher education in the Netherlands**

Higher education in the Netherlands is partly conducted in English language. The use of English as a language of education is no longer restricted to higher education. Implementation of bilingual and multilingual education in the Netherlands is regulated to a certain degree by various acts and resolutions of the Dutch government and European Commission/Europarlament. However, its major principles are defined by demands of business, technologies transfer and labor market (Extra and Yagmur, 2012).

### **Empirical Research and Trips to the Dutch Universities**

Research trips to universities and secondary schools in the Netherlands in 2014 were funded by the 2014 Bolashak scholarship (Kazakhstan). Discussions with administration and faculty

staff facilitated comprehension of the Dutch university system peculiarities in terms of bilingual teaching, including structure, management and languages taught.

Research interviews and analysis of the major stakeholders at Wageningen University revealed that bilingual tuition was mostly conducted at graduate studies level, combined with English language training at the Linguistic Centre. There were special multilingual groups at the undergraduate level (mostly for foreign students) and few undergraduate programs and courses in English, e.g. Tourism.

Research trip to The Hague University of Applied Sciences illustrated that all undergraduate programs were conducted in English, which was justified by the goal to attract foreign students and acquire advanced technologies. Personal meetings and interviews with the university scholars and faculty (including program manager Johan Krop and lecturer of English Tatyana Vladimirova), along with research of their curricula and syllabi confirmed the university's tendency to bilingual instruction.

Another research trip to Dalton den Haag School with its complete English language instruction demonstrated the tendency of Dutch secondary education to internationalisation and meeting labour market demands. There were also some courses in English at Leiden University Computer Science program. The proportion and percentage of courses taught in Dutch and English vary in different universities, based on students' language proficiency and career needs. Attendance of a symposium on Multilingualism in Hogeschool (Leiden) and its Information Market (in November 2014) confirmed once again the tendency of the Dutch higher education to technologies transfer by means of English language tuition.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations for Implementation of Multilingualism and MLE in Kazakhstan**

Since the 1960s, multilingualism plays an important role in both socio-economic development and effective communication between persons, who otherwise do not share a native dialect or language. A number of relevant state and international treaties (such as Lisbon Strategy) were established in Europe, Asia and the USA, promoting bilingual/multilingual practices. Despite growth in English language use, demand for other languages was sometimes greater than demand for English language, especially for European SMEs to boost their exports and reduce business expenditures.

The main goal of multilingual education is pursuit of equity and social justice. In Kazakhstan, the significance of learning Kazakh, Russian and English was emphasised on the state level within the "Trinity of languages" programme. In Kazakhstan, the state policy is to teach and learn three languages simultaneously and equally, while in the Netherlands, it is mostly bilingualism, which starts at primary and secondary education level, rather than at higher education level. Research trips to the Netherlands in 2014 illustrated that bilingual tuition was primarily run at graduate studies level, while there were special multilingual groups at the undergraduate level. The percentage and proportion of courses taught in English and Dutch vary in different universities. The driving force was to attract foreign students and develop advanced technologies transfer by means of English language.

Having analysed multilingualism and MLE policies and practices, the following measures are recommended for successful implementation of MLE in Kazakhstan:

- Development of multilingualism at the primary and secondary school levels in order to prepare students for trilingual tuition at university level;
- Reforming curricula of higher educational institutions by Ministry of Education and

Science, i.e. increasing academic hours for teaching English language and introducing special disciplines in English at undergraduate level, as well as transfer of postgraduate education to complete multilingual tuition;

- Promotion of faculty's and students' knowledge of English through facilitation of various extracurricular activities at university language centers.

### Acknowledgments

The research project was funded by the Kazakhstani Presidential Fellowship program "Bolashak" and supported by the Dutch counterparts for the project – Dutch Academic Services (DAAS) and Leiden University Graduate School of Learning (ICLON).

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