

MULTILINGUALISM AT LOCAL LEVEL: RESULTS OF THE SURVEY CONDUCTED IN GAVAR STATE UNIVERSITY

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The paper discusses an up-to-date issue of multilingualism (plurilingualism) emphasizing this phenomenon at local level – the level of a particular university. In order to understand the linguistic situation at Gavar State University as of February 2019, we conducted a survey among bachelor and master students of various faculties and departments. Altogether 50 students were chosen randomly who participated in the survey. A detailed questionnaire with various questions was developed by us which was offered to participants. They had to fill in the questionnaire and answer the questions indicating the language or languages given in the form. Having analysed the results of the survey, we came to the conclusion that students of Gavar State University are multilingual in general, mastering their native language Armenian and one or more foreign languages (Russian, English, German, etc.). It also appears that the spheres of using foreign languages are dominated by a certain foreign language. The results of the survey can be beneficial while developing language policies in the university.

Keywords: *Multilingualism, Plurilingualism, bilingual, multilingual, linguistic situation in Armenian HEIs, language of instruction, survey, Gavar State University.*

Introduction

The definition of multilingualism is a subject of debate in the same way as the definition of language fluency. “On one end of a sort of linguistic continuum, one may define multilingualism as complete competence and mastery in another language. The speaker would presumably have complete knowledge and control over the language so as to sound native. On the opposite end of the spectrum

would be people who know enough phrases to get around as a tourist using the alternate language” [2].

According to CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) multilingualism differs from plurilingualism. In this core document multilingualism is defined as “the knowledge of a number of languages or the co-existence of different languages in a given society” [1, p.4].

It is widely known that nowadays most of the world’s population is bilingual and multilingual. This is especially evident for regions, where inhabitants have different ethnic background. Armenia is a monoethnic state where about 98% of population are Armenians, hence the Armenian language predominates. On the other hand, it is a well-known fact that more of the half of our population is bilingual due to the historic, cultural, political and other ties with Russia.

In Armenia, as in other countries of transition, the social demand of the day requires stable knowledge of foreign languages. Any Armenian, bilingual or multilingual, must be able to use languages in real-life situations, in study, work and elsewhere.

At our university (Gavar State University) Armenian, Russian, English, German and French languages are taught currently.

The situation is especially interesting at the Faculty of Philology of Gavar State University with its three departments:

- ❖ Department of Armenian language and Literature;
- ❖ Department of English language and Literature;
- ❖ Department of Russian language and Literature.

Besides, foreign languages are taught at all other faculties of our university:

- Faculty of the Humanities;
- Faculty of Economics;
- Faculty of Natural Sciences.

The language of instruction in all faculties of the university is Armenian – the official language of the Republic of Armenia. The great majority of courses at the Department of Russian language and Literature are delivered in Russian, and many courses at the Department of English language and Literature are delivered in English. Students of the Department of English language and Literature have the opportunity to master two additional foreign languages – German and French.

The linguistic situation is quite interesting at the Department of Russian language and Literature. Traditionally all the students of the Department of Russian language and Literature were graduates of Russian schools (i.e. the schools where Russian was the language of instruction), their first language was

either Russian or they were coordinate bilinguals. But after the political changes and transformation of our society which took place during the last three decades the situation has radically changed: currently most of our students are graduates of Armenian schools, their first language is Armenian, their family language is Armenian too. Russian, though the language of instruction, is a foreign language for them with Armenian being their family language. In spite of this fact we can proudly state that students of the Department of Russian language and Literature of Gavar State University demonstrate high level of Russian language proficiency. This gives them the opportunity to do most of the subjects using Russian as the language of instruction.

Methodology of the Survey

In order to understand the linguistic situation at Gavar State University as of February 2019, we conducted a survey among bachelor and master students of various faculties and departments. Altogether 50 students were chosen randomly who participated in the survey.

They had to fill in the questionnaire and answer such questions as *What language do you usually use while:*

- *speaking with your family members,*
- *speaking with your relatives;*
- *speaking with your neighbors;*
- *speaking with your friends;*
- *shopping;*
- *using transport;*
- *at the university,*
- *writing letters, other documents;*
- *reading newspapers,*
- *reading fiction,*
- *reading special literature;*
- *listening to the radio;*
- *watching TV;*
- *using social media (Facebook, Instagram, etc.);*
- *searching for information on the Internet; etc.*

Answer options were: Armenian, Russian, English, both Armenian and Russian, both Armenian and English, other languages (please specify). The student also had to mark what language their first language was, and what language they consider to be their native language and to point out the language of instruction at kindergarten and at school.

We were also interested in the information about their residence site. (The question was *Have you ever lived outside Armenia? If yes, how long?* Answer options – *never, less than 2 months, less than 6 months, less than 1 year, 1 year, 2 years, more than 2 years*). Students also provided information about their faculty and department (the information was necessary to understand if the languages are considered to be their language of instruction or not).

All 50 students of our university filled in the questionnaire. The analyses of the data received gives us the right to state that our students are multilingual and use different language systems in different domains and situations of communications.

Results of the Survey

After statistical analysis of the data received, the results of the survey can be represented as follows.

80 % of the responders usually speak Armenian with their family members, 20% use both Armenian and Russian languages at home.

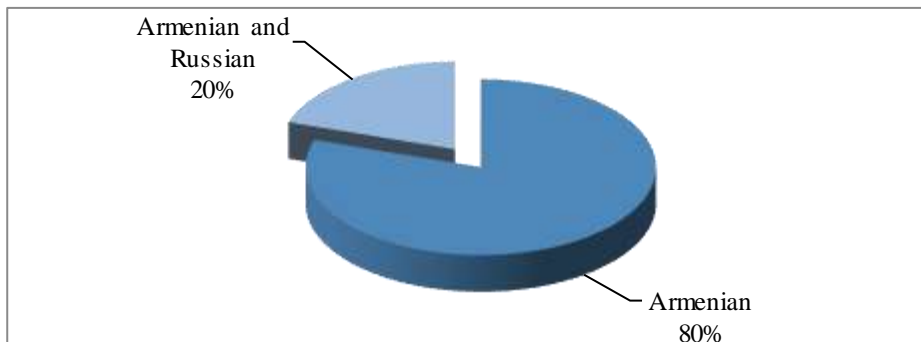


Chart 1. What language do you usually use while speaking with your family members?

78% of the students involved in the survey generally use only Armenian for communication while shopping or using public transport and when talking with their neighbors.

But for communication with friends Russian and English (French, German) are also used. 30% of the responders stated that they usually speak Armenian and Russian to their friends and 10 % use in that situation 3 languages: Armenian, Russian and the foreign language they study (English, French or German). Yet 60 % use only Armenian.

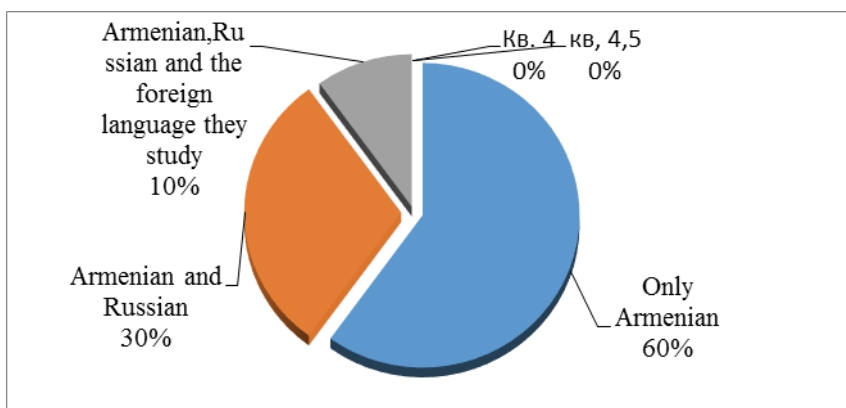


Chart 2. What language do you usually use while speaking with your friends?

24% of the responders write letters only in Armenian, 4% - only in Russian, 40% - in Armenian and one foreign language, 32% - in three languages.

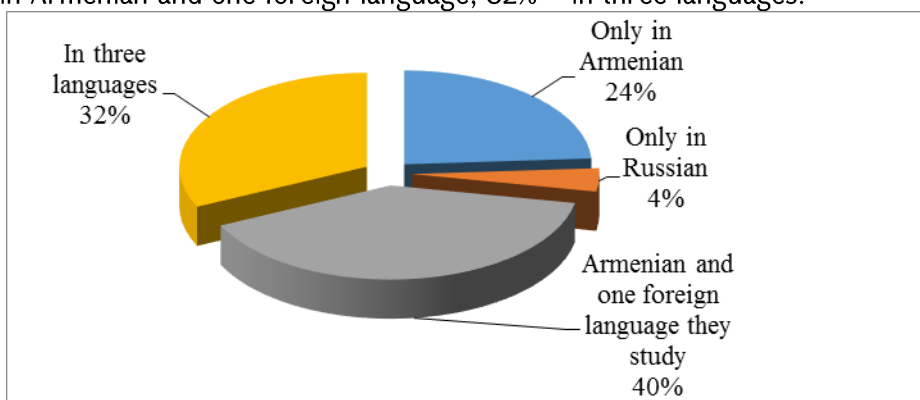


Chart 3. What language do you usually use while writing letters?

The picture is quite different when we deal with the receptive forms of communication – listening and reading.

72% of the responders use Armenian and Russian for listening to the radio, 28% use only Russian.

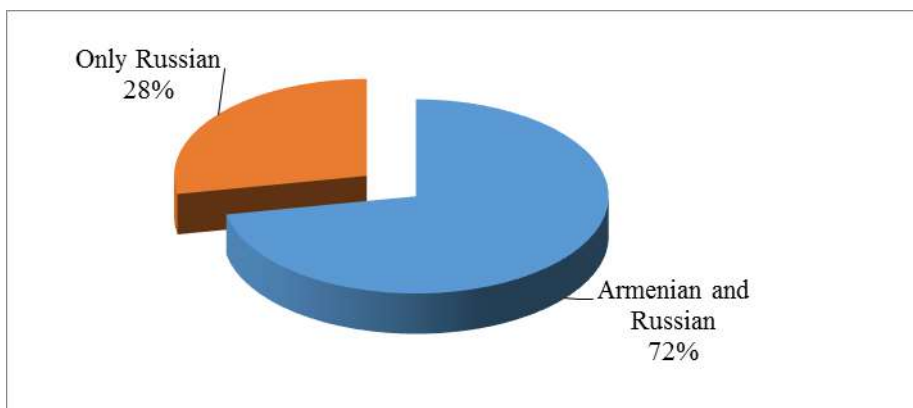


Chart 4. What language do you usually use while listening to the radio?

60% of the responders use Armenian and Russian while watching TV, 16% - only Russian, 24 % - Armenian, Russian and the foreign language they study (English, French or German).

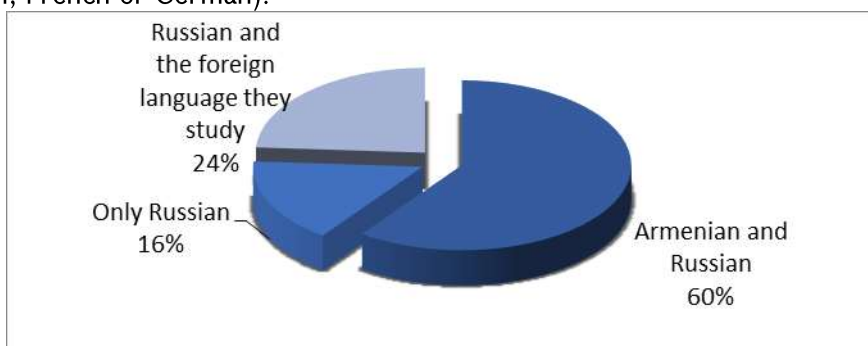


Chart 5. What language do you usually use while watching TV?

28% of the responders read newspapers and magazines in Armenian and Russian, 4 % - only in Russian, and 68% - in Armenian, Russian and the foreign language they study- English French or German.

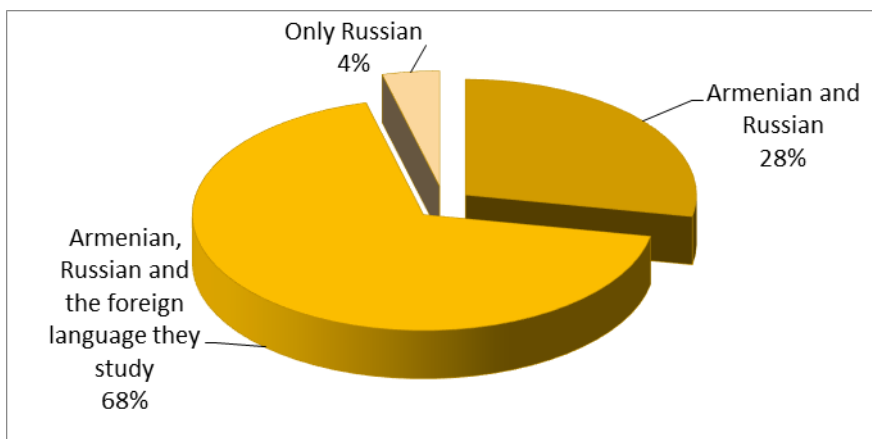


Chart 6. What language do you usually use while reading newspapers?

As to Literature, 24 % of the responders read fiction in Armenian and Russian, 4% - only in Russian, and 72% - in Armenian, Russian and the foreign language they study (English French or German).

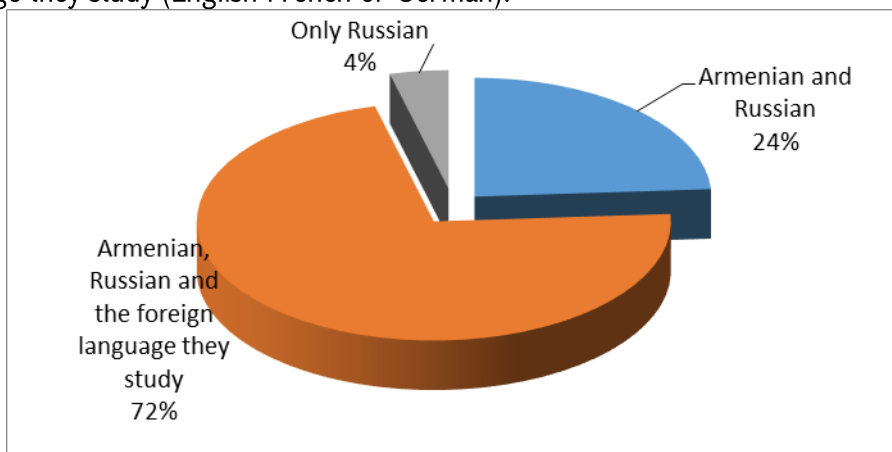


Chart 7. What language do you usually use while reading fiction?

We also intended to define the mother tongue and the first language of the responders. Therefore, we included several questions into the questionnaire such as:

- *What is your mother tongue?*
- *What language did you learn first?*

- *What language was the language of your breeding and schooling in early childhood?*

These questions helped us to find out that 98 % of our students consider Armenian to be their mother tongue, and for 100% Armenian at the same time is the first language, i.e. the language they have been using since early childhood.

The others (mostly the citizens of different countries of former USSR: Russia, Georgia) claimed Russian and Armenian (2%) to be their native language.

It is worth mentioning that 12% of the responders spent 2 and more years outside Armenia, while 85% have never left their native country – Armenia. We believe this fact to be of great importance and it must be taken into consideration.

Conclusion

Caused by the results, this survey suggests two possible conclusions.

First, it appears that students of Gavar State University are multilingual in general, mastering their native language Armenian and one or more foreign languages (Russian, English, German, etc.).

Second, it appears that the spheres of using foreign languages are dominated by a certain foreign language.

Application of the results: The results of the survey can be beneficial while developing language policies in the university.

References

1. Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment. Council of Europe, Cambridge University Press, Strasbourg, 2001. – 260p.
2. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Multilingualism>, viewed: 15.02.2019.

ԲԱԶՄԱԼԵԶՎՈՒԹՅՈՒՆԸ ՏԵՂԱՅԻՆ ՄԱԿԱՐԴԱԿՈՒՄ. ԳԱՎԱՌԻ ՊԵՏԱԿԱՆ ՀԱՄԱԼՍԱՐԱՆՈՒՄ ԱՆՑԿԱՅՐԱԾ ՀԱՐՑՄԱՆ ԱՐԴՅՈՒՆՔՆԵՐԸ

ԲԱՐԻԿՅԱՆ ԱՆԱՀԻՏ

ԳՊՀ բանասիրական ֆակուլտետի «Անգլերեն լեզու և գրականություն» բաժնի մագիստրատուրայի շրջանավարտ

ՍԱՐԳՍՅԱՆ ՌՈՒԶԱՆՆԱ

*Մանկավարժական գիտությունների թեկնածու, դոցենտ
ԳՊՀ օտար լեզվի և գրականության ամբիոնի դասախոս*

Հոդվածը նվիրված է ներկայումս չափազանց արդիական համարվող բազմալեզվության խնդրին: Նկարագրվում է բազմալեզվությունը տեղային մակարդակում՝ մեկ համալսարանի մակարդակում: Լեզվական իրավիճակը

պարզելու նպատակով Գավառի պետական համալսարանում իրականացրել ենք հարցում, որին մասնակցել են տարբեր ֆակուլտետների 50 ուսանողներ: Մշակվել էր զանազան հարցեր ներառող բավականին մանրամասն հարցաշար: Արդյունքների քննությունը ցույց տվեց, որ ԳՊՀ ուսանողները հիմնականում տիրապետում են մի քանի լեզվի, բայց տարբեր ոլորտներում և հաղորդակցման իրավիճակներում նախապատվությունը տալիս են այս կամ այն լեզվին: Քննության արդյունքները կարող են հետագայում կիրառվել բուհում լեզվաքաղաքականություն մշակելիս:

***Քանալի բառեր՝** բազմալեզվություն, երկլեզու, բազմալեզու, լեզվական իրավիճակը ՀՀ բուհերում, ուսումնառության լեզու, սոցիալացում, Գավառի պետական համալսարան:*

МУЛЬТИЛИНГВИЗМ НА ЛОКАЛЬНОМ УРОВНЕ: РЕЗУЛЬТАТЫ ОПРОСА, ПРОВЕДЕННОГО В ГАВАРСКОМ ГОСУДАРСТВЕННОМ УНИВЕРСИТЕТЕ

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Статья посвящена чрезвычайно актуальной в настоящее время проблеме мультилингвизма (многоязычия). В центре нашего внимания находится проблема мультилингвизма на локальном уровне – на уровне одного университета. С целью выяснения языковой ситуации в Гаварском государственном университете был проведен опрос, в котором приняли участие 50 студентов различных факультетов. Был разработан достаточно подробный вопросник, включающий разнообразные вопросы. Анализ результатов показал, что студенты ГГУ в основном владеют несколькими языками, но в разных сферах и ситуациях общения отдают предпочтение тому или иному языку. Результаты анализа могут быть использованы в дальнейшем для разработки языковой политики в вузе.

Ключевые слова: мультилингвизм (многоязычие), билингв, мультилингв, языковая ситуация в армянских вузах, язык обучения, социопрос, Гаварский государственный университет.

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