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“Glocal” Identity, Cultural Intelligence and Language Fluency

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Abstract

This article takes a look at modern European and Northern American concepts and research on the influence of multilingualism, and bilingualism as its most common type, on transformations of personal identity in a multicultural environment. In question, the possibility for a new identity type, which is an amalgam of “local” ethnocultural and global (universal) identities, with the idea of cultural intelligence – a concept proposed by British psychologists - being one of the possible instruments for acquiring such identity. Additionally, the authors take a look at opportunities for future research on CQ, language, and identity.

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1. “Glocal Identity”

In the modern world a lot of people get simultaneously involved in two, three and more cultures which come as a result of long-term business travel, international marriages, educational programs, immigration, living in multicultural countries etc. Multilingualism becomes an important factor of social and multicultural mobility, significantly contributing to the world’s mixing. “Glocalization” – a stress on everything “local” within the global setting – has become one of the central trends of cultural globalization process [1]. All this creates a high demand on identities of a multiple nature, which bring together various cultures and assume a high level of

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multilingual and multicultural competence. Further we will attempt to identify various approaches to understanding the role of languages in ethnic and cultural identity transformations.

We refer to the notion of ethnocultural identity as the result of being aware and experiencing the personal “I” and the group “we” within cross-ethnic relations, as well as the result of cognitive and emotional perception about one’s own and other ethnic groups, schemes and behavioral strategies within the group in the situation of inter-ethnic contacts [2], [3], [4]. Bilingualism and multilingualism, after F. Grosjean [5], we define as regular use of two or more languages in everyday life, rather than knowledge of two or more languages without their functional and active usage.

Thoughts about global identity are not new. Socrates used to say: “I am a citizen, not of Athens nor Greece, but of the world!”. Perhaps today his motto would sound more on like “I am a citizen, of Athens, of Greece and of the world!”. The idea about this new type of identity has been widely discussed as part of the discourse about cohesion of “global” and “local” in the new type of “glocal citizens”, those who live in two to three places (i.e. countries or regions), think “globally” and act “locally”. H. Arrow et al. [6] interpret this modern identity three-fold: 1) identity of a so called “global citizen”, who does not care what country to live in and what people/culture to identify with; 2) identity of an employee of some transnational corporation (economical, religious, educational), who is “enclosed” in foreign cultures as part of his/her job; 3) identity shaped by intricate interrelations of cultures due to an individual, and therefore unique set of social and personal multicultural connections.

According to the last interpretation, this new identity can be seen as a more individualistic perception of oneself among others, based on an individual’s experience and life path. More than that, treated this way, it is assumed to encompass previous or new local ethnic identities [7], [8]. Thus, “glocal” identity as a new type of ethnocultural identity in the modern society is, on one hand, a more personal formation if compared to more “collective” social and ethnic identity, as is grounded in one’s “I” vs. “We” (group identity). On the other hand, it is characterized by acquired multicultural competence (first of all, its cognitive and behavioral components), based both on local and global experience and knowledge. The main acculturation strategies for a multicultural individual are integration, balanced biculturalism and bilingualism [9].

1. Identity and the Second Language Acquisition

In the last decades of the past century European and Northern-American sociolinguists and social psychologists suggested various models of the second language acquisition which would also assume, as the result, certain changes in the initial identity. Five of them have been more thoroughly developed and are presented further [10; 293]:

1. *W.E. Lambert’s Socio-Psychological Model*, according to which an individual's initial identity changes along with the second language acquisition. It can result in identity conflict, as the person must learn to adjust to the new cultural patterns, including verbal behavior patterns while interacting with native speakers. The higher the new language competence, the more likely the identity conflict.
2. *R. Clement’s Model of Social Context*. The author argues that a bilingual individual gives importance to the ethnolinguistic vitality of both the first and the second languages. It’s the integration level with native speakers, and not solely the acquisition and usage of the second language, which leads to identity changes.
3. *Intergroup Model of H. Giles and J.L. Byrne*, based on factoring out integrative motivation as the key factor in second language acquisition, which defines a certain identification of a language learner with the native speakers.

4. Similar thoughts were expressed by R. Gardner, who introduced a *Socio-Educational Model*. According to his model, an integrative motivation covers all spheres of life. Changes in identity of a language learner may become a non-verbal result of such integration (mostly pertaining to cultural values and beliefs).

5. According to *Spolsky's Preference Model*, any identity changes are shown as a non-linguistic result of the SLA process. This transformation happens due to change in various attitudes of the second language learners (first of all, toward the second language native speakers, when the former want to integrate with the latter), as well as in the learners' motivations.

It is important to mention two more theories significant for this field of research – the ethnolinguistic vitality theory by H. Giles et al. [11] and the concept of language in ethnicity by H. Haarmann [12]. According to the first, when a group demonstrates low in-group identification, open ethnic boundaries, expressed tendency to identify with other groups, intergroup comparisons that devalue their own group, there is a high possibility that by having such a low ethnolinguistic vitality, the group will eventually assimilate and reach a high competence in the language of the dominate group, the one they compare themselves with [12]. H. Haarmann [12] believes, that Giles's model works only on the macro-, but not micro- level, which involves a whole cluster of variables, general and specific, that directly or indirectly influence language structure, language choice and language behavior within ethnic groups. He studied the role of language in ethnicity and ethnic identity formation and developed his own Eco-Linguistic Model. It evaluates ethnicity-related factors (psychological, linguistic, social, economic) as internal ecological variables (vs. external ecological variables, such as demographical, political etc.), which determine language behavior of groups and separate individuals. According to Haarmann [12], ethnicity in bilinguals can undergo one of six possible changes – profilation, separation, proliferation, amalgamation, incorporation, and conglomeration. The first three are based on the process of ethnic division, and the last three – of ethnic unionization.

2. Cultural Intelligence

One of the most common takes on ethnic and cultural identities today is to view them as substances we choose when code-switching (interchanging languages). Ethnography-oriented sociolinguists and psycholinguists approach ethnic identity as the result of expressed social meanings, created by a speaker in the process of code-switching [13]. This being said, every act of speaking or even every act of keeping silent can be a sign of choosing an identity [14]. The speaker always goes for the language, which symbolizes rights and responsibilities convenient for them at that very moment. Together with the language they choose the most convenient identity [9].

Such an approach requires new variables that can serve as tools and allow for grasping the above mentioned interconnectedness. One of these key variables can become the idea of Cultural Intelligence (CQ). P. C. Early and S. Ang [15], the authors of the concept, define cultural intelligence as the ability to effectively interact with people coming from other cultural settings. That is, cultural intelligence is not only the ability to understand the behavior of people from another culture, but also the ability to demonstrate those cultural patterns accepted in that culture [15]. Being a cognitive and behavioral concept, CQ works outside of cultural borders and “above cultures”. That is why the CQ Model comprises four components – meta-cognitive, cognitive, motivational and behavioral, which can be measured with the 20 item Four Factor Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQ Scale or CQS) [16], [15].

The main volume of research continues in the area of organizational psychology, to which the CQ concept was initially applied. There CQ and global leadership, CQ and multicultural teams, and CQ and cultural adaptation and performance are being studied. L. Van Dyne [17] in his most recent “Cultural Intelligence Overview”

proposes, as one of the CQ development tips, focusing on more proximal outcomes, such as intercultural idea sharing, communication patience, intercultural adjustment. Some recent research tackles CQ and non-work, such as travel and study international experience pertaining to the number of countries visited, length of international experience etc. (for a more detailed overview see Ang et al., 2010) [18].

The CQ concept is very practically-oriented, which is why its authors focus first of all on abilities and skills that allow for effective interaction in concrete life situations, by embracing and using various cultural peculiarities. However, the concept pays insufficient attention to the problems of social-cultural adaptation to the new reality, as well as to the formation of global thinking and cross-cultural tolerance, which are key to making CQ a tool for effective interplay between cultures in the modern world. Although, it should be mentioned that some attempts to include the above mentioned components into the CQ theory exist. Thus, R.D. Bucher [19] has listed in his “Building Cultural Intelligence” program, as one of the nine components, the skill of “managing bias”. Herewith he implies “recognizing bias in ourselves and others and dealing with it effectively” [19]. Additionally, Oolders et al. [18:290] demonstrated in their research that tolerance as one of the six sub-facets of openness to experience (along intellectual efficiency, ingenuity, curiosity, aesthetics and depth) are significantly related to the four factors of CQ. Moreover, some recent works state that CQ negatively correlates with such socio-cultural variable as ethnocentrism [20], and positively correlates with global identity understood as “self-transcendence toward universalism and benevolence and a person’s sense of belonging to the human species” [16: 595], and even fosters global identity in members of multicultural teams [21].

Ang et al. [18] and Molinsky [22] see value in further refining the conceptualization and assessment of behavioral [22] and the other three [18] components of CQ. For example, Molinsky suggests considering two dimensions of behavioral CQ – of performance and of identity, which opens up a lot of new questions regarding the way these dimensions relate. Ang et al. [18] believe that more research is needed on sub-factors of each of the four CQ factors, because “each of the factors is multidimensional in nature and needs to be understood more deeply at the sub-facet level”. Although all sub-factors of the behavioral CQ pertain to verbal and non-verbal (tone, rhythm, pauses, pose and mimics of a speaker) communication skills, only a small number of scholars have addressed the problem of real interconnectedness between language skills and CQ. A positive relationship has been claimed between language skills and CQ, although later the authors called for additional research [23]. A more recent study demonstrates that CQ and the number of languages, as well as the number of foreign languages do not relate, but there has been revealed a positive relationship between foreign language fluency and overall CQ [24]. We believe that there still are some white spots deserving attention in this realm, like the role of biculturalism and various types of bilingualism (e.g. simultaneous vs. sequential) in the prediction of all four CQ factors.

CQ encompasses three levels – universal (knowledge about the world), cultural (knowledge about another culture or cultures) and real (knowledge and ability to deal within different cultural settings, within concrete circumstances “here and now”). All this makes CQ a real tool for preserving multiple local identities and ethnic cultures in the global world, as well as to professionally succeed in the multicultural world as individuals. Having a high CQ, one combines historical time, social space and individual life path – the three main coordinates, according to A.G. Asmolov, of the cultural-historical paradigms of the personality [25; 291].

There is a strong demand on changing ethnocultural identities of modern people within the three coordinates towards “glocal” identities for those people, who want to be successful and highly engaged in their professions, regardless the country where they choose to achieve their potential. It is truly hard to imagine a language-less adaptation in a new culture (if we are not talking about limiting ourselves to the errands of daily life). That is why

bilingual and multilingual competence is a key to acquiring CQ and building a new identity, which allows for penetrating into the “meta-linguistic” space “above cultures”.

The representatives of modern culture have been making attempts to reflect this multifaceted space. Some of the examples include the Internet-publication “Snob”, which we consider quite a successful endeavor, and the stage performance Lipsynch by the Canadian director Robert Lepage. The first project is a media space initiative targeting a new audience, and namely Russian speaking individuals who live and work around the world (so called “global Russians”). Within the space they can discuss in Russian diverse “global” and “local” topics of their interest, which they consistently do. The project is basically an opportunity to move important discussions from one cultural ambient to another one with the help of multilingual and cross-cultural competence. The other project is a 9-hour play about the life stories of people from different cultures, which communicate with each other in 4 languages. All the stories intertwine in one universal destiny, and it turns out that one can tell about the most important things in any language, including the language of music, which reigns over all languages and cultures.

3. Conclusion

The analysis of this problem within different theoretical models and empirical studies shows that the majority of scholars admit the fluctuant and ever changing nature of ethnic identity [10], [13], [26] and bilingualism [27]. And it is very important for us to understand, that even when an individual is eager to integrate with another culture by studying this culture’s dominant language, using other means of adaptation, he/she will not acquire an identity characteristic of ‘natives’ of this culture. Rather than being a mechanical combination of the old and the new identities, it will be an identity of a new quality level. Furthermore, the formation of identity within a multilingual setting can be understood as the conscious formation of meta-knowledge and meta-skills (in the form of cultural intelligence), allowing for preserving one’s initial cultural values and obtaining a new vision of the world, above all firmly set limitations and scripts written out well ahead of time. Furthermore, “thinking out” of the CQ concept in the direction of cross-cultural tolerance, the role and impact of one’s primary cultural identity (and biculturalism and bilingualism within it) on CQ skills should be continued, as the concept itself is an excellent theoretical and practical platform for future interdisciplinary research in cross-cultural interaction, co-existence and existence.

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