

Language and Multiculturalism in Azerbaijan in the Context of Globalization

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ABSTRACT

The article examines the interrelationship between the linguistic environment and multiculturalism policy in Azerbaijan within the context of globalization. Contemporary globalization has generated profound transformations in the spheres of information, education, science, and culture, resulting in the increasing prevalence of foreign languages, particularly English, in various domains of public life. Against this backdrop, the preservation of the national language, cultural identity, and multicultural values has emerged as a strategic priority. In this regard, the analysis of Azerbaijan's model of multiculturalism and its language policy under the conditions of globalization constitutes a significant and timely scholarly issue, both from theoretical and practical perspectives, with particular emphasis on ensuring sustainable social and cultural development.

The aim of the article is to identify the impact of globalization processes on the linguistic situation and multicultural environment in Azerbaijan, to analyze the opportunities and challenges arising from these processes, and to substantiate the importance of maintaining a balance between the development of the Azerbaijani language and the preservation of national and moral values.

Keywords: globalization; Azerbaijani language; linguistic landscape;

multiculturalism; language policy; national identity; tolerance; national spiritual and moral values.

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary period, globalization is widely regarded as a complex and multidimensional phenomenon characterized by the increasing intensity of economic, political, scientific, technological, and cultural interactions among states. While this process facilitates socioeconomic development, accelerates the dissemination of knowledge and innovation, and promotes the expansion of international cooperation, it simultaneously generates new challenges related to the preservation of national identity, linguistic heritage, cultural diversity, and spiritual values. Consequently, a comprehensive evaluation of the multidimensional impacts of globalization, the effective utilization of the opportunities it offers, and the development of appropriate strategies to mitigate its potential adverse effects have become issues of paramount theoretical and practical importance.

Globalization and integration processes should primarily advance along technological dimensions. In matters concerning culture and spirituality, however, a more conservative approach should be adopted to safeguard national values and cultural heritage. Contemporary developments indicate the emergence of various forms of deformation in the artistic

and aesthetic education, tastes, and moral development of younger generations.

The globalization of economic relations among states and the gradual emergence of an integrated global economic space have necessitated the adaptation of the cultural systems, modes of cultural perception, and behavioral patterns of societies within the international community of states to the demands of this evolving global reality. Nevertheless, this process should not be interpreted as the uncritical assimilation of external cultural influences. Rather, it presupposes the active representation and promotion of national ethnocultural heritage among other cultural communities, as well as the establishment of a mutually beneficial exchange of cultural values based on intercultural dialogue and interaction. Undoubtedly, the fundamental trajectory of the reciprocal exchange and synthesis of cultural values should be directed toward the formation of a universal global culture that promotes the advancement of humankind, ensures its equitable and sustainable development, and facilitates the harmonious evolution of sociocultural relations. One of the most significant contributions of globalization to contemporary development is the opportunity to access scientific and informational resources in a more efficient and cost-effective manner, to adapt and apply knowledge relevant to the needs of society and the state across various domains, and ultimately to transform acquired knowledge into the creation of new intellectual and cultural values. In the modern knowledge-based society, the capacity to generate, utilize, and disseminate such values is considered a fundamental indicator of progress and sustainable development.

Azerbaijan cannot isolate itself from the surrounding global environment or focus solely on its internal affairs. It will inevitably remain involved in the expanding processes taking place within the international community and will experience both the positive and negative

dimensions of these interactions. However, it is essential that Azerbaijan pursue an evolutionary path of development by strengthening its national culture, advancing scientific potential, enhancing knowledge production, and improving its educational system. The value system of globalization primarily emphasizes such principles as liberal economy, liberal human rights, knowledge, and advanced technologies. This system of values also establishes new rules of interaction that are essential for each country to determine its position within the emerging global order. These rules, however, require independent interpretation and implementation by each nation and state in accordance with its specific historical, cultural, and socioeconomic context. Azerbaijan has not yet fully initiated this process with its entire potential. One of the reasons for this situation may be the absence of a sufficiently strong and consistent commitment toward globalization, while another factor is the incomplete understanding of the essence, mechanisms, and implications of globalization processes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The relationship between globalization, language, and multiculturalism has been extensively examined within the fields of sociolinguistics, cultural studies, and globalization theory. Scholars emphasize that globalization creates both opportunities for linguistic development and challenges for the preservation of national languages and cultural identities. According to Crystal (2012), the global expansion of English has significantly transformed patterns of international communication, education, and knowledge exchange, while simultaneously raising concerns regarding the status and sustainability of other languages. Fishman (1991) argues that the survival of national and minority languages depends on effective language policies and the ability of societies to maintain linguistic continuity within changing social environments. From a sociolinguistic perspective, language is not merely a communication tool but also a

fundamental component of collective identity, cultural memory, and social cohesion (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2021). Therefore, globalization requires a balanced approach that combines openness to global linguistic processes with the protection of national linguistic heritage.

Research on Azerbaijan demonstrates that language policy and multiculturalism represent interconnected dimensions of national development. Azerbaijani scholars have highlighted that the Azerbaijani language functions as a key element of national identity while multiculturalism serves as a framework for maintaining social harmony among different ethnic and religious communities. According to Mammadov (2009), linguistic situations are shaped by complex sociolinguistic factors, including social relations, functional distribution of languages, and historical-cultural conditions. Jafarova (2025) emphasizes that globalization influences language development through the expansion of international communication and the increasing presence of foreign linguistic elements, particularly English. At the same time, Azerbaijan's multicultural model, based on tolerance and intercultural dialogue, demonstrates the possibility of preserving national values while participating in global integration processes. As Mammadov (2017) notes, multicultural societies require a dynamic balance between cultural diversity and shared social values. Thus, existing literature suggests that the Azerbaijani experience represents an important case for examining how national language preservation and multicultural coexistence can be maintained under the conditions of globalization.

DISCUSSION

The Impact of Globalization on the Azerbaijani Language and the Linguistic Situation

Globalization has contributed to the formation of a distinctive linguistic situation in Azerbaijan. It is well established that language represents a multifunctional and

fundamental means of communication. In the process of active intellectual and cognitive activity, language serves as a dominant and inseparable factor of social engagement. Language also functions as a means of substantiating ideas and persuading others, while one of its primary functions is to guide and shape the development of intellect and thought in pursuit of specific objectives.

A linguistic situation represents a form and manifestation of social existence, encompassing territorial and social relations, functional interactions, as well as geographical, regional, and political-administrative characteristics. From this perspective, the linguistic situation constitutes an important subject of sociolinguistic research. The functional relationships among the components of a social-communicative system determine the formation of a linguistic situation. The concept of linguistic situation generally demonstrates a dynamic character within large linguistic communities, including countries, regions, and republics, where it undergoes continuous changes influenced by various social, cultural, and political factors (Utkin, 2002).

Communicativeness constitutes one of the fundamental characteristics of the linguistic situation. Two principal forms of the linguistic situation are manifested within the process of communication: (1) the potential form and (2) the actual form. The description of the linguistic situation corresponds to the speech situation; in other words, the direction of interaction extends from the linguistic situation toward the speech situation, during which the semantic and conceptual relationship of the word is established. Within this process, the intellectual and cognitive image formed in the human mind interacts with the linguistic expression, creating a reciprocal transition from image to word and from word to image. The cognitive representation activated through the word is ultimately reflected in the corresponding object or phenomenon (Beck, 2001).

The linguistic situation is confronted with a number of social challenges. For instance, globalization as a contemporary phenomenon exerts a significant influence on language development. This process manifests itself in two aspects within any given country. As a result of Western dominance, the range of words borrowed from the English language into modern Azerbaijani has expanded considerably. Consequently, changes corresponding to various spheres of social life are occurring within the lexical composition of the Azerbaijani language. Similarly, the process of Latinization, namely the transition to the Latin alphabet, has progressed more slowly in the contemporary Tatar language compared with many leading Turkic languages (Jafarova, 2022).

The linguistic situation is characterized by multifaceted and comprehensive typological features. The typological characteristics of a linguistic situation include linguistic diversity (monocomponent and multicomponent structures), ethnic diversity (homogeneous language groups), demographic balance, communicative capacity (equal balance), the proportion of communicative domains, genetic diversity (degrees of genetic proximity), typological diversity, functional distribution, and prestige (Kameneva, Paymakova, 2022).

The linguistic situation in Azerbaijan is complex and relatively homogeneous. The relationship between the two languages in the country — Russian and Azerbaijani — still does not differ significantly from that of previous periods. Although the functional use of the Russian language has declined to some extent, Russian-educated individuals continue to work in state institutions. At present, English and Turkish are also present within the Azerbaijani linguistic environment as components of the linguistic situation. Individual bilingualism in Azerbaijan does not have the same widespread character as it did in previous periods. The aspects of the linguistic situation in the country have also undergone certain changes.

Preservation of National Spiritual and Moral Values and Religious Tolerance in the Context of Globalization

In the contemporary period, characterized by the increasing challenges associated with globalization, the preservation of this tradition inherited from our ancestors requires a particular sense of moral responsibility. Considering that religion represents a powerful instrument in influencing human consciousness and social structures, throughout history, certain destructive forces seeking to advance their own interests and ensure political and economic dominance have attempted to exploit the influence of religion on a broader scale. This process continues to manifest itself in the modern era as well. The consequences are evident: the true essence of religions, which call for unity, mutual respect, and peaceful coexistence among people, has been distorted, and religion has been transformed into an instrument of various political agendas. It is evident that attempts have also been made to apply such a “policy,” which has been tested in a number of countries around the world, against Azerbaijan (Mammadov, 2009).

The ongoing development of society and the rapid transformations occurring in the contemporary world as a result of globalization have necessitated reforms within the legislative system aimed at ensuring a higher level of protection of human rights and freedoms, further improving social welfare, and strengthening national and public security. At the same time, the tragic events that have taken place in the Middle East on religious grounds have demonstrated that certain opportunities exist for conducting subversive activities in ideological spheres, and that these opportunities continue to be exploited in various forms.

The regulation of state–religion relations in Azerbaijan, the establishment of stability in the religious sphere, and the preservation of an environment of tolerance among different religious denominations at the state

level are also associated with the legacy of the National Leader. He emphasized that tolerance and a culture of peaceful coexistence constitute inherent characteristics of Islam and the Azerbaijani people, stating: "I believe that the Azerbaijani people, by their very nature and character, possess a strong sense of tolerance. Tolerance is also rooted in the Islamic faith, which is practiced by the majority of Azerbaijan's population" (Akhundov, 2001).

State-religion relations in Azerbaijan have been established on a solid foundation, and there is no alternative to public awareness and educational initiatives aimed at promoting religious tolerance, developing a culture of coexistence, and preventing radicalism and extremism. As expressed in a well-known saying, an uneducated person resembles an unpolished mirror; refining this mirror and illuminating the path toward a clearer future through it can only be achieved through knowledge and enlightenment.

Therefore, one of the key priorities of future activities will be to expand the scope, quality, and effectiveness of educational initiatives aimed at countering religious radicalism and extremism, which are often regarded as among the major challenges of the contemporary era, as well as superstition that has historically contributed to the distortion of religious values and ignorance that leads societies toward intellectual and moral decline. These efforts are essential for preserving national spiritual and moral values, sustaining traditions of tolerance and multiculturalism, and fostering an educated, knowledgeable generation capable of contributing positively to its family, society, and homeland (Jafarova, 2025).

As a result of globalization, the functional use of national languages may gradually decline, while the languages of numerous small ethnic communities may face the risk of disappearance. Traditional customs, cultural practices, and social habits may also be subject to gradual erosion. This process is expected to occur progressively, rather

than through sudden revolutionary changes. In this regard, the influence of globalization is already becoming evident. For instance, an examination of the names of wedding venues, restaurants, and cafés reveals instances of insufficient attention being paid to the state language. Similar tendencies are increasingly observed in television programs and the mass media as well.

CONCLUSION

Globalization, as a multifaceted phenomenon exerting a profound influence on contemporary social, cultural, and communicative processes, has brought significant transformations to Azerbaijan's linguistic environment and the system of multicultural relations. On the one hand, this process contributes to the expansion of international cooperation, the acceleration of scientific and technological development, and the intensification of intercultural interaction. On the other hand, it generates new challenges related to the preservation of the national language, cultural identity, and spiritual values.

The analysis demonstrates that, within the context of globalization, the development of the Azerbaijani language and the strengthening of its functional position in society are of particular importance. The growing role of foreign languages, especially English, as global means of communication should not undermine the status of the national language; rather, it should contribute to the formation of a multilingual and competitive society. In this regard, the primary objective of state language policy is to ensure the preservation, advancement, and effective functioning of the Azerbaijani language within the contemporary communication environment.

At the same time, Azerbaijan's model of multiculturalism represents an important sociocultural framework that promotes peaceful coexistence among various ethnic, religious, and cultural groups based on the principles of mutual respect, tolerance, and equality. Under the conditions of

globalization, the preservation of national spiritual and moral values, as well as the promotion of religious tolerance and cultural diversity, constitute essential factors contributing to social stability and sustainable development.

Therefore, one of the key challenges facing Azerbaijan in the era of globalization is the establishment of an effective balance between the preservation of national linguistic and cultural heritage and active integration into global processes. Achieving this balance requires the implementation of a consistent language policy, the expansion of educational and awareness-building initiatives, and the continuous promotion of multicultural values.

Declaration by Authors

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