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## Multiculturalism as a Central Concept of Multiethnic and Polycultural Society Studies

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*The article examines the concept of multiculturalism as framings provided by theories of multicultural and heterogeneous societies, languages and power and understandings of the broader social context in which multiculturalism typically comes into play.*

*Keywords: multiculturalism, polylinguism, socio-cultural differences, unification, immigration, cultural diversity, linguistic assimilation, heterogeneous cultural groups, tolerance, religious discrimination, linguistic rights, language policy.*

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### Introduction

The concept of *multiculturalism* as a core idea has been taken up across social sciences. It has been used, applied and adapted by a wide range of researches. It is currently one of the most articulated concepts within social theories and practice. The term “multiculturalism” as well as its multiple derivatives such as “multicultural society”, “policy of multiculturalism” came into academic glossary in 1960-s in Canada.

According to O.V. Golovkina “Academic circles have not yet agreed on the strict definition of the term “multiculturalism”. Scholars failed to assign a fixed meaning of this term and could not prohibit the usage of it in various meanings” (Головкина, 2005: 41; Малахов, 2002: 48-60).

The dictionary of Canadian political process defined *multiculturalism* as “policy of the Liberal government of Canada in 1970-s, continued later by the Conservative government. The policy

aimed at encouraging the development of cultural heritage of ethnic groups in Canada that did not belong neither to the British nor to the French ones (The language of Canadian Politics, 2001: 184-185).

Similarly, sociological resources more often define *multiculturalism* as “a system of beliefs and behaviors that recognizes and respects the presence of all diverse groups in an organization or society, acknowledges and values their sociocultural differences, and encourages and enables their continued contribution within an inclusive cultural context which empowers all within the organization or society” (Rosado, 1997). According to a particular meaning, multiculturalism is presented as ideology; discourse; sphere of policies and practices (Cashmore, 1996: 144).

As a concept, multiculturalism assumes special logics and emerges as an instrument of

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inter-group cooperation aimed at maintaining specific culture and providing individuals and groups with capability to take equal part in all spheres of social life: from politics to culture.

Within the ethnography of communication, the term “multiculturalism” is used empirically and descriptively by scholars who study cultural heterogeneity of the society, its polyethnicity and multinationalism as characteristic features, i.e. societies “having a sophisticated ethnographic profile” (Тишков, 2002). According to historical origin, social dynamics and structural relationship of ethnolinguistic and confessional groups within the unified society, scholars, as a rule, distinguish four types of multicultural societies, namely: precontemporary empires, multinational societies in Europe, post national polyethnicity and colonial zone.

The modern meaning of “multiculturalism” turned into existence by post national cultural dynamics both in the frames of national states and so called post national (immigrants) states. It is worth supporting the point of view of the vast circle of social scientists arguing that there is a difference between *multi-nationalism* and *polyethnicity*. These two terms refer to different types of *multiculturalism* (Kimlicka, 1995; Miura, 2005: 75; Головкина, 2005: 46). They consider multi-nationalism to be a historical result of either oppressive or voluntary unification of the former independent, self-governed, isolated from the point of view of its territory cultures into one state. What it comes to polyethnicity, it is a result of the individual and group immigration. These groups have got the state of their own. The state is outside this political society. Moreover, post-national multicultural societies are characterized by polyethnicity.

### **Point of View**

Australia, Canada and Northern European countries evidence that the major reason of

multiculturalism was multi-scaled immigration process. A number of immigration waves caused an immense influx of population and its ethnic, linguistic and religious background.

As for the American continent, one should say that an idea of the so called “melting pot” was dominant. According to it, representatives of various ethnic groups would definitely melt into an unified identity of the citizen of the USA. It should be pointed out that this idea belonged to J. de Krevcker, a Franco-American farmer, who featured diversity of rural life on the American continent at the end of XVIII century. Before the World War II this idea turned to be a major tendency of social changes. The *melting pot* concept resulted in closing newspapers of immigrants and converting the former immigrants’ associations into those ones that switched in their practice from mother tongues of its members into English.

The Canadian model of multiculturalism, in contrast, respects diversity of all kinds. That is why one of the crucial issues of the multicultural policy in Canada at the end of the XX century was integration of immigrants that did not necessarily ended up by assimilation. It is worth mentioning the fact that institutionalisation of multiculturalism in its contemporary meaning was set up in Canada in 1971. The government headed by P. Trudeau declared multiculturalism an official policy and ideology of Canada. Due to ethno-demographic scales of contemporary migration process the Canadian government encourages cultural diversity. Migrant minority groups are nowadays being numerically compared to local population that was recently considered to be the majority population.

Besides, cultural identity manifestations received public expression: e.g. new associations based on regional, ethnic or linguistic characteristics came into existence; primary education was delivered in native

tongues; newspapers were published in native tongues etc.

The point was: despite declared equality migrants could not be equal members of society. Due to internal and external obstacles on the way to social integration migrants organize their own ethnic communities within which languages and cultural patterns and norms are being maintained. These groups are characterized, as a rule, by common socio-economic status that is, in fact, their marker. Group members are identified as merchants, taxi drivers, and laundry owners. It is clear that migrants' isolation turns to be their cultural peculiarity.

Migration changed immensely cultural history of Western Europe in 1960-s-1970-s. Originally a language unification principle was part and parcel of the European nations-states. The brightest example of such a nation-state was a concept of the French nation "une et indivisible" (unified and indivisible).

Due to new immigration waves of 1960-s-1990-s such European countries as Ireland, Greece and Italy having been for a long time the major countries-exporters of emigrants have turned into those ones that encapsulated diverse communities of immigrants' minorities. In other words, nowadays Europe looks like polyethnic New World.

Modern European multiculturalism is noticeable in big cities – megapolices. According to statistical data, one fifth of the population in London was "non-white" population, a quarter of the population in Frankfurt or Brussels were foreigners (Головкина, 2005: 49). In 1990 10 % of registered population in France was born abroad.

There is a substantial difference between the policy of multiculturalism in immigrant and national states. These two types of states differ in terms of their attitude to cultural diversity generated by migration (Головкина, 2005: 63).

O.V. Golovkina argues that there are different types of multiculturalism. The concept of multiculturalism was elaborated in Canada in a strict accordance with the social order to explain the national problem. This concept was addressed to Francophone population aiming at calming it down because the French – speaking population did not agree to be considered as the minority group in Canada.

There is another model of polyethnic and multicultural society management that is called the *republican model of tolerance* or the French model of the *civil nation*. This model was originally formulated by Dominique Schnapper. He declared a major thesis: citizens are equal regardless of their ethnic and religious background. The principle of equality is the most powerful tool to struggle against segregation (Miura, 2005: 75).

The republican model invented methodology of cultural diversity management. It set a principle of a strict division of a group and an individual. All forms of cultural differences that are manifested by the individual's life should be respected. This maxim in question is considered to be a key principle of laicity that does not prioritize any form of religion and guarantees freedom of faith. The formula of the tolerant attitude has been shaped up in a long struggle with the Catholic Church.

The republican model ignores ethno-cultural and religious background. The equality principle encourages, according to H. Miura, assimilation of foreigners into the French or the Francophone society (Miura, 2005: 75). This assimilative approach has got much in common with Anglo-conformism or the American theory of *melting pot*. The only difference is that France dismantled slavery in its colonies while in the USA, according to Du Bois, the colour of skin stands behind the American democracy (Ibid., 76).

Moreover, the republican type of assimilation assumes equal opportunities. Alternatively, American multiculturalism assigns equality to victimized and discriminated individuals in regard to racial, gender or what so ever characteristics. The model of multiculturalism tolerates diversified communities to live together not losing their identity. But what is more, it contradicts the republican model due to splitting up the society into numerous constituent parts and not providing them with further integration.

The republican model is considered to be an universal principle of emancipation of an individual. Multiculturalism, in contrast, is seen to be a differentiating method aimed at, on one hand, breaking down apartheid, and on the other hand, sharing and supporting its racial scheme. The republican model is being projected to modernity, multiculturalism, in contrast, is inspired by post-modern critics and post-colonial ideology.

Some scholars subject the idea of multiculturalism to criticism due to its interpretation of being a simplified form of ethnic group contraposition.

Nowadays massive mobility of population creates preconditions for immersing cultural combinations or *cultural hybridization*. Due to cultural mixture that got the name of *creolisation*, one can mention a so called “Antilles model of a multiple and multiple embedded Creole background” (Ibid: 75). N. Miura draws special attention to the model of creolisation. He considers creolisation breaks down the idea of common ancestry and, therefore, culture can not be viewed as a monolithic one.

The model in question values ethnic unification and cultural mixing that leads to multiple and mosaic identity that was also called an *unified rhizoma* or *rooted identity*. This type of identity does not refer to any particular territory.

Its characteristic feature is relationship within the society.

There is no the same individual. The identical individual exists only if he or she is in relation with another, identical individual. Having been born as a result of relationship, the individual possesses distinctive features.

It is worth distinguishing two notions: “acquiring the Creole characteristics” (creolized features) and “creolisation”. The first concept presumes a long historical process of cultural mixture. The second one results a dynamic development of mutual collisions and exchanges that nobody can predict.

In addition, N. Miura argues that the world is getting creolized. However, contemporary Creole identity is characterized by residence qualification and, consequently, by a new territory acquisition. This fact is in opposition to the original idea of the Creole identity aimed at permanent regeneration firstly due to nomadic life style, migration and change of habitat. In conclusion, the scholar states: the Creole model is far from implementation neither in a particular ethno-cultural nor language policy. That is why it is an ideal theoretically equipped model, which would not have been implemented into practice. In other words, one should differentiate empirical studying of social phenomenon from a normative model. At the same time, N. Miura assumes that following to this model would be the only means to stop assimilation.

Theorists share the emphasis on the point of view that the French republicanism and the American multiculturalism are objectification of both universality and diversification. Meanwhile, creolisation is being perceived as synthesis of the two models. All in all, it represents logics of diversity.

Such dialectics, admittedly, is far from virtue. Its weakness is explained by the logics of

detrterritorisation which is next to impossible to link with national or state language. Otherwise stated, the weakness, mentioned above, may be used as a bargaining chip of creolisation leading to revolutionary procedures in the sphere of language policy.

In 1990-s social and political theories, including the theory of *language policy* and *language planning* focused multiculturalism as an academic study issue. The theory of language planning values the close connection of multiculturalism with cultural issues such as: pluralism/particularism; identity (otherness and difference); linguistic rights within heterogeneous cultures; globalization etc.

The concept of “multiculturalism” being treated as a group of ideas and actions of different social entities (statutory bodies, for instance) aiming at equal development of diverse cultures, bridging different groups of population in many social spheres, equal opportunities for being employed and provided with educational options is connected with the concept of “tolerance”. The definition of “tolerance” was confirmed by the General UNESCO conference in 1995. It was placed in the Declaration of the Principles of Tolerance and was defined as “respect, acknowledgement and understanding of a rich cultural diversity of the world, forms of self expression and identity manifestation” (Головкина, 2005: 55).

Multiculturalism as a whole presumes that individuals and groups are entirely incorporated into a society without neither losing their national or any other identity nor being restricted in their rights. Multiculturalism is a conceptual foundation of non-conflict coexistence of multiple heterogeneous cultural groups in one environment. As a result, a growing diversity leads to outlining multicultural values, such as an idea of mutual commitment and freedom of choice.

## Resume

There are several types of multicultural models of ethno-linguistic management in the polyethnic regions:

- Anglo-conformism or the American theory of *melting pot* leads minority cultures and languages to assimilation;
- Canadian multicultural model emphasizes respect of diversity of all kinds including a multilingual model in the sphere of the international trade that is based on respect of the linguistic rights of the consumers and producers from different countries of the American continent;
- Australian multicultural model values respect for the freedom and dignity of the individual, freedom of religion, commitment to the spirit of egalitarianism that embraces mutual respect, tolerance, fair play and compassion for those in need and pursuit of public good. Australian society also values equality of opportunity for individuals, regardless of their race, religion and ethnic background;
- Republican model of tolerance or integration ( the French model of civil nation) leads to linguistic assimilation;
- Antilles model of multiple Creole background due to cultural mixing (creolisation);
- Educational model of the European Union that maintains plurilinguism on the individual level and creates conditions for learning foreign and regional languages;
- Model of functional coexistence transfigures a model of polarization between world languages and the minority ones;
- European model of multiculturalism combines an “elitist” plurilinguism (active functional plurilinguism) and a “consumer English”. This combination assumes a

good command in several languages and a limited command in English, necessary for consumer purposes;

- Model of optional multiculturalism reflects transition in the world practice onto a widely spread and understood language, English, for example, and its use as a language of corporate and business communication under globalization.

Meanwhile discussions are spreading throughout Europe nowadays on vitality of multiculturalism; another reason to recognize

and understand is that multilingualism, being closely connected with multiculturalism, is “mainstreamed” across multicultural policy areas, including lifelong learning, employment, social inclusion, competitiveness, culture, youth and civil society, research and the media. As it was emphasized, “Linguistic diversity is a ...rewarding challenge for Europe” and “the harmonious co-existence of many languages in Europe is a powerful symbol of the European Union’s aspiration to be united in diversity, one of the cornerstones of the European project” (COM (2008) 566 final).

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## **Концепция «мультикультурализма»:**

### **интегративные модели**

### **управления полиэтническими**

### **и поликультурными сообществами**

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*Статья отражает общенаучные положения о всеобщей связи и взаимной обусловленности развития языка и многоаспектных социальных проблем современности: этнической идентификации, культурного разнообразия, образования, миграции, глобализации в условиях поликультурного пространства. Понятие мультикультурализма рассматривается в нескольких аспектах: как идеология, как дискурс, как политика и практика. На основе типологических признаков выявляются наиболее типичные модели этноязыкового обустройства, обеспечивающего жизнеспособность референтных языков и культур.*

*Ключевые слова: мультикультурализм, полилингвизм, социокультурные различия, унификация, иммиграция, культурная диверсификация, лингвистическая ассимиляция, гетерогенные культурные группы, толерантность, религиозная дискриминация, языковые права, языковая политика.*

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