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LANGUAGES (MIS?) MANAGEMENT A CASE STUDY OF A SWISS PRIVATE SECONDARY BOARDING SCHOOL AND A RUSSIAN-SPEAKING NICHE MARKET

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Abstract. This paper questions the role of language management and embracing cross-cultural differences in a changing neoliberal and global economy. The research uses critical discourse analysis to study multimodal promo-

tional documents of a Swiss private boarding School, ethnography to conduct a case study of the same School, and qualitative interviews with the Russian-speaking customers of the Schools. If promotional discourse of the school contributes to the stereotypical image of Switzerland and is aimed at local customers, language management of the School changes as a reaction to the Swiss economic situation: facing bankruptcy, the School manages languages differently, constructing its promotional discourse around languages and cross-cultural communication. Finally, the qualitative interviews with the Russian-speaking parents reveal power relations and linguistic discrimination of the customers, based on cultural misunderstanding, that are considered normal.

Keywords: language management, ethnography, discourse analysis, neoliberalism, Russian speakers, private education

1. Introduction

Despite a recent interest in educational tourism, traveling for learning is not a new concept. Since the 17th century, aristocratic youth was getting a part of their education abroad (Ritchie, 2004). Switzerland was a part of the traditional Grand Tour, favoured by the English upper classes since the early 19th century. By the end of the century, it became a middle-class tourist destination (Tissot, 2000).

First Swiss private boarding schools were founded in 1880s, and by 1960s Swiss landscape of international private boarding schools showed a wide range of institutions. In addition to traditional Swiss private boarding schools, the landscape of private institutions has changed in the late 2000s. More and more international companies were establishing in Switzerland, creating a demand for international and intercultural education. It brought investments from international educational groups on the Swiss market, that opened several immense and successful private international schools (Gaitzsch et al., 2014).

According to the Swiss Federation of Private Schools, there are roughly 100'000 students attending 240 Swiss private institutions (FSEP, 2018).

The massive wave of Russian student emigration started in the middle of 1990s after the crash of the Soviet Union. The Russian elite (*new Russians*) got opportunities, contacts and money to

send the children abroad, mostly to Universities (in Germany, the UK, the USA) (Gardner, 2011), and since the middle of 2000, also to private boarding schools. By 2011, Russia became the world's third fast-growing economy (Pavlenko, 2015), and placing children in boarding schools got affordable even for the middle class.

With the growth of tourism and student migration, the need of language competencies became striking, but most of the middle class did not speak foreign languages bearing the legacy of the Iron Curtain, Soviet grammar-translation methods of language teaching and absence of real-life communication (Medvedev, 2018).

At the same time Pavlenko (2015) argues that countries with strong economies, such as Switzerland or the UK, do not necessarily aim to attract large numbers of Russian visitors, and they support that with their visa policies. She suggests that tourist accommodation happens on a local level by the businesses directly working with upmarket Russian-speaking customers (p. 8 and p. 14). This idea initiated present research rooted in critical sociolinguistics: Swiss educational tourism aiming and managing Russian-speaking niche market. The ability of educational business to overcome cross-cultural differences, create effective business communication defines the marketing strategy of the school, sharpens its offer and the choice of the curriculum, and defines the formal contacts with the customers.

2. Objectives/Purpose of the study

There is more than a thousand of Russian speaking students studying in Switzerland at the moment (SEM, 2018).

Some of the Russian promotional educational websites will say that the quality of the Swiss private education is the pride of the country (Smapse 2018). For the last eight years, I have met Russian-speaking students and their parents in various educational situations: interviews with the management and the teachers of private schools, during and after state and federal examinations,

during educational consulting interviews, international educational trade fairs, even my son's kindergarten seeks advice in education policy aiming Russian-speaking niche market.

This paper focuses on Russian-speaking educational tourists in Switzerland, the way they get information about Swiss private education from promotional materials, and what is their perspective on education abroad. Based on an example of a Swiss secondary private school, I reveal the marketing strategies that are discursively constructed to attract a particular type of customers, and confront them with the discourse of the customers. Mismanagement of multilingual recourses and cross-cultural differences with the Russian-speaking customers is not only a proof of linguistic discrimination, but a reason of losing customers leading to the School bankruptcy.

The main focus of this paper is to reveal the tensions within language management strategies of educational institutions, that will allow better understanding the role of languages in late capitalism and reflect on the process of languages capitalisation in different discourses aimed at the Russian-speaking niche-market.

3. Methodology and sub headings

Two qualitative approaches that conceptualise my work are ethnography and discourse analysis. Critical discourse analysis is an approach that highlights the social, ideological and political dimension of discourse (Cameron and Panovic 2014, 66). The method allows examining the language of texts systematically in details, identifying ideological concepts and understanding the construction of a particular version of reality. In order to provide systematic analysis, I generated coding categories from the data in HyperResearch software.

Within the ethnographic part of the research, I used all marketing communication material of the School, such as a promotional leaflet, a school website, advertisement in magazines and newspapers and newspaper articles about school news. As the research started in 2015, I also obtained School detailed curricu-

lum, staff meetings observations, interview with school management.

Finally, I asked two Russian-speaking families, that had their children at School, to participate in face-to-face qualitative interviews. Interview is an important way to generate data, as it allows to know the values and beliefs of the clients that pay money for the education in another country, and gives insights into their social positioning. (Codó, 2009). The interviews contained open general questions about languages in the life of their children, the Swiss education system, about school promotion and the life of their children at school, satisfaction with the school linguistic offer, language curriculum, and more global perspective of languages in education. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed in the program HyperTranscribe and coded in HyperResearch.

Sub headings

- Promotional Discourse of a Private Boarding Secondary School
 - Discourse of Pride
 - Mismanaging Languages
 - Local & Traditional Education
 - Crisis Management; Languages Shape the Offer
 - Cross-cultural communication Increases the Appeal
- Perspective of the Russian Speaking Parents
 - Parents Miscommunication with the Schools
 - Linguistic Discrimination as a Norm
 - Vision of Languages & Cultures
 - Commodification of Languages

4. Result/Findings

For many years, the School was a successful business, that was not commodifying on the linguistic recourses or using languages in the marketing campaign. Provided language support for international customers was limited by summer language

courses and year-long language courses. Even though the School contains the word *international* in its name, it was selling traditional classical French-speaking education, ignoring cross-cultural differences.

In three years, various socio-economic processes and impact of neoliberalism and globalisation, changed the language management of the School, putting the languages, cross-cultural communication and bilingualism in the heart of improvements. The new discourse was constructed around bilingual program, but it was not a success. In the saturated market of the Swiss private education, the chosen market segment and the provided services were not matching, so the School started losing more and more customers. Finally, even the most loyal customers, the Russian-speakers, started leaving, not getting any support or understanding of their cultural attitudes and behaviours: linguistic discrimination during all communications with the school, relations with the teachers and the School management, importance of autonomy and guidance in education, reactions on marks and examination results.

From the ethnographical part of the research and from the interviews I have seen that the Russian-speaking parents do not have sufficient linguistic competence to choose the private school, conduct interviews or understand the School curriculum. This situation creates power inequality and miscommunication between the company and its customers, that is seen as a norm from the both sides.

Such inequality is accepted by the customers, as they are investing in the linguistic competence of their children, that is constructed in the discourse of pride, for example, accessing culture in other languages; and profit, for example, solving everyday communicative situations, translations for the parents, getting career, international education and possibility to be naturalised.

The tension was created between the marketing discourse of the School, based on the notion of pride and traditions, mismanaging languages in promotional materials and course pro-

grams, and the logic of neoliberalism making the person in charge of his education and economic success (Holborow, 2012; Zimmermann and Flubacher, 2017). The parents were expecting the return on investment in education, but constant linguistic discrimination, cross-cultural mismanagement and power relations with the School did not allow them to take active participation in the choice of the school programs and suggest language support or personalisation of learning. And more globally, the School was not adapted to the Russian-speaking niche market, miscommunicating with the parents, the students and mismanaging languages and cultural differences.

5. Discussion

The role of languages in new socio-economic conditions of global neoliberal economy has changed. Firstly, languages provide added-value and commodify on the notion of pride, secondly, they are strategically employed in marketing and communication strategy of any business, including educational, finally, they are seen as a marker of distinction, that manifests individual symbolic capital, available to the speakers. Management or mismanagement of linguistic and multilingual recourses has a direct impact on financial profit of the institution according to the rules of neoliberalism, the choice of this institution and a marker of distinction.

This work questions the vision of private elite education as effective business fully aimed at a particular market segment, created by the customers' demand. The processes of power relation and miscommunication with the customers creates tension between the institutional discourse of pride and customers' expectations of profit.

Language management is a complex process, integrated in the marketing strategy and corresponding with the demands of the parents, it is also integrated in the customer care, when the mismatch of provided services and promotional materials reduces the appeal of business, withdraws customers and leads to bank-

ruptcy. Inability to see the role of languages as a marker of distinction, as a marketing argument and as an element to beat the competitors in the neoliberal global economy, brings a successful business to an end and forces to invest in the language management measures. On an example of a case study I tried to prove that languages play a crucial role in micro- and macro-economy.

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THE INTEGRATION OF ANGLICISMS IN MODERN RUSSIAN SPEECH (ON THE BASE OF EXAMPLES FROM MASS MEDIA)

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Abstract. The strengthening of information flows, the emergence of the Internet, the expansion of international relations, the development of the world market, economy, information technology, participation in competitions, international festivals, fashion shows – all this could not but lead to the emergence of new words and concepts in the Russian language. This paper highlights the latest borrowings of English words that emerged in the 21st century.

Keywords: anglicism, Russian language, classification, modern English borrowings, mass media, sociological survey, investigation

1. Introduction

The most important mean of human communication is language. It has a certain vocabulary, grammar and sound system. In the process of development, the language comes into contact with other languages and undergoes various changes. These changes affect all levels of the language, but especially its vocabulary, which reacts, reflects and records the changes taking place in all spheres of life and activity of people.

Nowadays, English is the language of international communication, becoming a significant language with a high social