

PERSPECTIVES OF HIGHER EDUCATION LANGUAGE POLICY DEVELOPMENT IN ARMENIA, BELARUS, GEORGIA, MOLDOVA AND UKRAINE AND POLICY-DRIVEN RESEARCH

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Summary

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1. Introduction

In recent years internationalization of higher education has turned into both the value and the mainstream, however, the lack of sufficient foreign language competences of students and staff obstructs its smooth implementation in many countries. The Eastern European countries such as Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine are among them, as higher education institutions did not treat foreign languages as a tool to internationalize curricula, and especially to link them with the employment needs of graduates on the labor market. The political upheavals that took place after the fall of the Soviet Union were accompanied by a series of changes in the context of the higher education system. Though very slowly, countries are moving in the direction of internationalization of the content, faculty, curriculum structure, location of delivery of higher education, and all these measures require sufficient foreign language skills and competences both of the staff and the students at higher education institutions. Within the Bologna process several isomorphic changes took place such as participation in the works of international associations, enrolment in international accreditation and world university rankings which increased the urgency of obtaining international learning and increasing the international dimension in the context of higher education. The isomorphism was typical of the Soviet system of higher education too with Russian as a lingua franca at the universities and centralized governance from Moscow related to study programmes, plans and curriculum design. The foreign languages were the part of the academic curricula before and after the fall of the Soviet Union, but for a long time until the accession to the Bologna process they were not regarded as a tool for internationalization. Thus, language learning was mainly the perk of linguistics and literature programmes and they were not viewed in coherence with the internationalization process at higher education institutions in most of the Eastern European countries both on the national and institutional level.

Several policy papers adopted on the European level such as Basic principles related to learning foreign languages (Council of Europe (1982), Common European Framework of References for Languages (Council of Europe 1989), European Language Portfolio (Council of Europe 2001) which contributed to bridging foreign languages' and the concept of internationalization at higher education institutions on the national and institutional level in most of the European countries, and multilingualism started to be encouraged in all the European states including the Eastern partnership region. A series of laws and regulations were adopted to promote language diversity in education. The Barcelona objectives which were adopted by the EU member states, run that "all member countries would work towards implementing a one plus two (one first language, plus two foreign languages) approach to its education for all young people (European

Commission, n.d.)". "Article 165(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) emphasizes that 'Union action shall be aimed at developing the European dimension in education, particularly through the teaching and dissemination of the languages of the Member States', while fully respecting cultural and linguistic diversity (Article 165(1) TFEU)". In its contribution to the Social Summit held on 17 November 2017, the European Commission set out the idea of a 'European Education Area' where by 2025, 'in addition to one's mother tongue, speaking two other languages has become the norm'" (COM(2017)0673)".

Foreign languages have acquired a new relevance with the adoption of the Sorbonne declaration where the necessity to create a European area for higher education was emphasized and "development of a proficiency in languages" was clearly specified by the Ministers of France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom (Sorbonne Declaration 1998). The language issue as one of the main obstacles to mobility and European integration was later discussed in Berlin (Berlin Communiqué 2003) where "the necessity of ensuring a substantial period of study abroad in joint degree programmes as well as proper provision for linguistic diversity and language learning, were very definitely designated. Driven by this statement the higher education institutions (HEIs) in all the European countries started to develop new approaches and teaching methodologies oriented towards the students' language needs as well as reconsider their approaches to everything that was related to the "internationalization at home". The universities implemented Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach as a strategy for internationalizing the curriculum for teaching different courses in foreign languages within the study programmes. The blended learning approach (mixture of face-to-face learning methods and with web-based technologies) is also practiced, and the choice of the blend is determined by the characteristics of students, content and the goals of courses, online resources, etc. The latter stimulates learner autonomy and makes learners be responsible for their achievements which is very important for student mobility.

The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) has gathered together 48 different countries, and among them are Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine – the countries from the so-called "Eastern Partnership Region". The accession to EHEA has enabled these countries to align all their major commitments with the Bologna principles so as to make their higher education systems more attractive and accessible as well as competitive worldwide. Enhancing foreign language learning possibilities for all, both for students and staff, is one of the common challenges for all these countries, yet, there are several obstacles that hinder the efficient development of language policies at higher education institutions related to legislation, funding, mindset and attitudes which either prevent to understand the key role of languages or to implement efficient policies in higher education systems and institutions. They are connected with insufficient knowledge and skills of policy-makers and administrators to develop foreign language policies on the national level and implement them on the institutional level, lack of teaching staff for conducting study programmes in foreign languages as well as political concerns to strengthen the role of the national languages within the national higher education systems and restrict the use of foreign languages as the languages for instruction within the study programmes for the domestic students. Policy implementation requires also regular monitoring with a strategic orientation to permanent improvement of the situation. The studies on importance of languages and language policies are not many either, and the countries of post-Soviet space pay very little attention to the enhancement of the role of the foreign language curricula, language teaching and learning processes for increasing the international capacities of the higher education institutions. It is not a secret to anyone that internationalization was not defined as a priority in all the former Soviet states at earlier stages of the development of higher education systems, and transformation from "normalization" (1991-2005) to internationalization stages (2005-2019) has taken place within a long journey when the countries first decentralized the governance of universities, then developed a specific national landscape of higher education and only after it started to respond to international policy trends.

We should specify that the issue of a language policy in internationalization of higher education was not a priority or a distinctive feature of the profile of universities in all these countries in the soviet period

(Huisman J., Smolentseva A., Froumin I. (2018), (Karakhanyan S. 2018) O. V. (Klimanovich and I. I. Gancheryonok 2012), (V.Kushnarenko, L. Cojocari etc. 2012). Two paradoxical changes took places in post-communist countries – the national languages have acquired more importance for academic purposes and at the same time study programmes with foreign languages as a medium of instruction have started to spread across the systems. As a result the HEIs in post-soviet countries started to develop new forms of knowledge generation and production within their higher education systems through the active integration of international, intercultural and global dimension in different ways, making it the part of the university missions. The active use of technologies, collaboration in different networks and within various projects, increase of foreign language proficiency, recognition of credits obtained abroad are some of the key tools for producing new knowledge. For continuous and relevant knowledge generation the universities enrolled new participants, both students, teaching and administrative staff, because the knowledge generation requires complex networks to facilitate effective knowledge production. The knowledge production and the national interests are reflected in higher education reforms and governmental programmes which changed the role of foreign languages for education.

This research was initiated to scrutinize the experiences and explore the impact of foreign language policies on the internationalization agenda at higher education institutions in Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine as well as to observe the national contexts of linguistic challenges in higher education systems and sum up experiences of these countries based on an intensive collaboration with the Erasmus + higher education reform experts from former post-soviet states at different study visits, seminars and workshops since 2012, participation in the works of two Bologna Follow-up working groups on third cycle (2012-2015) and Monitoring (2015-present), enrolment in the fifth wave of Eurostudent (2012-2015).

The concept of a foreign language policy in our opinion is undoubtedly connected with the internationalization of higher education institutions, and though it has multiple dimensions, we agree with the definition proposed by J. Knight as it is “the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of higher education” (Knight J 2018:11). In other words, internationalization is not merely about the number of international students, or an improved curriculum or adoption of cross-cultural values, but how to string all these processes on one thread to better respond to the versatile challenges of the global society.

It is within the scope of this research to analyze case studies in five different national contexts and 15 higher education institutions in Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine having in mind the fact that all of them were under the linguistic tension in the Soviet times with the Russian language used as a lingua franca. In all these countries linguistic issues were to some extent politicized as well as the professional and the social relevance of languages was either underdeveloped or undermined by centralized strict approaches which left little space to the elevation of communicative competences of students and the staff in foreign languages in these countries in the Soviet times.

The impact of the foreign language policy at higher education institutions is even bigger than the extension of internationalization and mobility as multilingualism and multiculturalism as strategic axes of internationalization, may ensure the broader competitiveness of the graduates on the international labor market and a more sustainable development of the communities and the countries.

Our hypothesis is that in almost all countries we are dealing with a sluggish process of internationalization, which is explained by the lack of sufficient human resources capable of promoting internationalization, the lack of a systematic approach to solving problems, in many cases, fragmented processes, inefficient use of tools etc. It should also be noted that in many cases it was not the process of signing the Bologna Agreement that accelerated the process of integration of universities into the process of internationalization, but the investments of the European Union in the form of individual, institutional and inter-institutional grants.

2. The Brief Overview of the Situation

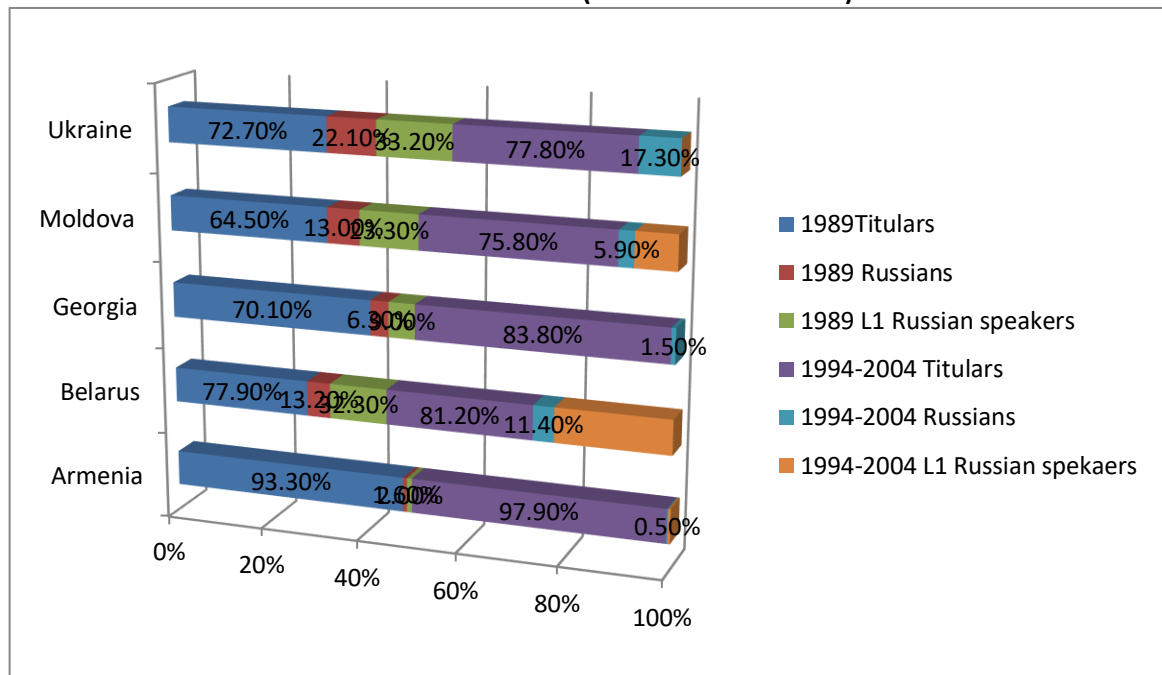
Since 2005 different changes took place in the higher education systems in Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine in the area of international education, international studies and transnational education that transformed the higher education landscape in these countries. They may be regarded as effective stages of accession of Eastern European countries to the Bologna process. (cited D.Wit by Kata Orosz & Laura W. Perna (Orosz K. & Perna L.W. 2016)).

The internationalization itself is also a phenomenon which has undergone several changes regarding the needs of the individuals and societies. As it is very well noted in the handbook for internationalization of PICASA project (2014-2016) – a Tempus project which was carried out in Armenia, Belarus, Georgia and Ukraine, very often it is mixed with different other processes. Internationalization was restricted to mobility of the students whereas it has different stages of development from of Internationalization 1.0 with the focus on personal benefits of internationalization to shift to international benchmarking for improving the quality of higher education which leads to systemic improvement and institutional cooperation labeled as Internationalization 2.0. Internationalization 3.0 may be labeled as they stage when the HEIs became ‘international’ or ‘internationalized’ with the key performance indicators developed so as to measure the internationalization of institutions and their different components (Handbook for Internationalization PICASA Project 2017).

Our study would not be voluminous if we do not look at the set of “rules for the game” for language education policies of these countries after the fall of the Soviet state. “The language was one of the most powerful identity markers” (Polese A. 2011) in the Soviet times, and after its collapse it has become one of the most important tools of state for nation-building processes in all the former post-soviet states. Thus, the newly independent countries first of all had to strengthen their national languages but with the parallel accent to developing foreign languages in the content of their education systems. The topic of developing policies for national languages was as new as the topic of policies for developing foreign languages in the contexts of higher education systems of these countries, and enormous efforts were made by the countries to create a constellation of favorable conditions as well as to promote the development of communicative skills of its citizens in foreign languages within the systems of higher education and beyond.

The transition and transformation to new economic and political systems and collaboration with the European countries, development of a new agenda for cooperation between the Council of Europe (CoE), the European Commission (EC) and Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine (Belarus hasn’t signed the Cultural Convention of the CoE yet) have turned into a new reference point for these states to reconsider language policies within education systems and set new objectives for improving foreign language teaching and learning across all education sectors. The Russian language as the lingua franca started to give way to English with the further development of a new linguistic landscape in the countries. At present we are witnessing a new phenomenon when the language policies and practices are targeted towards limiting or removing the Russian language from the formal education environment. From 1989 to 2004 the number of titulars, ethnic Russians and native Russian speakers (L1 Russian speakers) considerably decreased in all the countries under study:

Diagram1. Number of Russian Language Speakers from 1989 to 2004 in Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine (Pavlenko A 2008:284).



As it well seen from Diagram1, the sociolinguistic situation in all the five countries was not the same as the titular languages had a different expansion and status in Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. The figures prove that the number of L1 Russian speakers in all the five countries was higher than the number of ethnic Russians which means that a certain number of titulars and probably the minorities within these countries used Russian as a lingua franca. Within the next 15 years (2005-2019) the significance of the Russian language considerably decreased and the countries have undergone a series of changes as a result of a decentralization of their higher education systems in line with the major internationalization trends of the global world.

3.The policies on teaching foreign languages before and after the implementation of the Bologna reforms

The accession to the Bologna process has changed the attitude of many countries including the countries of the post-Soviet space to foreign language policies in the field of higher education. They started to develop new strategies targeted at equipping the students, the researchers and the staff with communicative skills and competences in foreign languages and intercultural communication for making them internationally more mobile. After the accession to the Bologna process, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine radically revised or are revising their priorities in the field of the language policy of higher education which implied the necessity to design new curricula and implement new pedagogical methodologies. In the Soviet higher education context there was a difference in the approaches to teaching languages at HEIs as the difference between the language teaching for linguists and non-linguists was not very much developed and practiced at higher education institutions in those times. Russian was not viewed as a foreign language, and hence, a different approach is used for this language. The concept of teaching Russian for professional communication was very well implemented as it was a vernacular language throughout the entire Soviet space. The traditions of teaching other foreign languages were somewhat different and were supposed to provide not complete, but partial acquisition of the foreign languages with the focus on reading and writing and not on listening and speaking, which did not imply a

separate development of especially speaking skills, let alone professional communication. It should be noted that textbooks for teaching languages for professional communication existed in that period either, but in general, they were labeled as "English, or French or German for non-linguistic universities or specialties". The subject teaching in foreign language specialized schools as not practiced in higher education in non-linguistic study programmes (it was only practiced at foreign language specialized schools where intensive foreign language teaching and teaching of some school subjects such as geography, history etc. in foreign languages was carried out with ten hours of instruction per week in the foreign language), but this was not the case at higher education institutions (Glyn Lewis E 1962: 9)

For Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine these features were alike, and the common heritage of approaches in foreign language education has made a deep imprint on the teaching models and methodologies of foreign languages for many years to come at higher education institutions in these countries. The shift to new policies and approaches in the higher education institutions was not easy and smooth; however, the creation of a new learning environment with the integration of foreign language teaching and learning for non-linguists has gradually started to remove the pedagogical tenets of the soviet times.

4. Methodology

Within the article an attempt was made to study the foreign language policies and practices related to the internationalization of higher education institutions in Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. The analysis of case studies is based on the research conducted from December 2018 to September 2019 in different universities in Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine to reveal information on several aspects of language policies in these countries such as profession-oriented language teaching and research, foreign language linked to the Common European Reference Framework for Languages, level of language competences of students within a bachelor study programme and role of languages in strategic positioning of the universities regarding internationalization and mobility of students and staff. The Eastern European countries are selected for this research as they have common heritage from the past, the author is familiar with education context of these countries and is in active collaboration with various higher education institutions in these countries.

The information is gathered through the desk research as well as face to face communication with Erasmus + higher education reform experts of these countries. The study embraces reports of governmental and non-governmental institutions, websites of universities, data of university rankings and other analytical data, research articles of individuals.

The study embraces the cases of 15 universities (the first three universities per each country were selected according to Webometrics rankings (WM)). WM "has been considered as relevant for the assessment of internationalization processes of HEIs". While other rankings focus only on a few relevant aspects (e.g., research results, web indicators, etc), WM covers all types of scholarly communication – formal and informal – with a greater possibility of reaching much larger potential audiences to offer access to scientific knowledge to researchers and institutions located in other countries, and also to involve interested economic, industrial, political or cultural stakeholders." The Webometrics also considered relevant for our research as it includes all the 15 HEIs from five Eastern European member states. Thus, we analyzed three higher education institutions per each country and for the desk research it provided us with sufficient qualitative data. When describing policies and practices we also refer to data of U-Multirank Rankings, as the international orientation section there takes into account the indicators which have a scientific interest in our study.



Table 1. List of the Universities Enrolled in the Study per Country with World Ranking Score in Webometrics (Webometrics 2019).

Country	Name of the University	World ranking
Armenia	Yerevan State University	2643
	American University of Armenia	3709
	Russian-Armenian State University	4959
Belarus	Belarusian State University	684
	Belarusian National Technical University	2715
	Yanko Kupala State University of Grodno	3382
Georgia	Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University	1423
	Ilia State University	1773
	Georgian Technical University	2088
Moldova	State University of Moldova	3151
	Technical University of Moldova	3202
	Nikolae Testemitanu State University of Medicine and Pharmacy of Moldova	7091
Ukraine	Sumy State University	1977
	National Taras Shevchenko University of Kiev	1995
	Kharkiv National University VN Karazin	2245

We correlate Webometrics and U-Multirank indicators as the criteria that measure the quantity and the quality of international orientation of HEIs in the U-Multirank, ensure greater international visibility of the universities in Webometrics. Such criteria as bachelor and master programmes (taking into account the “existence of joint/dual degree programmes; (2) the inclusion of study periods abroad; (3) the percentage

of international (degree and exchange) students; and (4) the percentage of international academic staff”, foreign language BA programmes, international doctorate degrees (the percentage of doctorate degrees that were awarded to international doctoral candidates), programme international orientation (“composite of joint/dual degree programmes, inclusion of study periods abroad, international students, international staff, teaching in foreign language”), student mobility, international academic staff, international joint publications, foreign language long first degree programmes which are a case in Belarusian higher education system) (U-Multirank: Catalogue of Indicators 2019) are closely connected with the foreign language policies and practices of the countries and their HEIs. The U-Multirank features were applied to those higher education institutions which are available in these rankings. The data from national rankings were not retrieved as not all the countries have national ranking systems.

We tried to reveal national and institutional strengths related to foreign language policies for boosting international dimension in higher education.

Our hypothesis is that in almost all countries we are dealing with a sluggish process of internationalization, which is explained by the lack of sufficient human resources capable of promoting internationalization, the lack of a systematic approach to solving problems, in many cases, fragmented processes, inefficient use of tools etc. It should also be noted that in many cases it was not the process of signing the Bologna Agreement that accelerated the process of integration of universities into the process of internationalization, but the investments of the European Union in the form of individual, institutional and inter-institutional grants.

5. Case studies on language policy models for internationalization

The language policy models are different in all the countries in terms of the language skills, university structures, as well as the strategic policies regarding the role of languages in the academic programmes, mobility of students and the staff. The schematic overviews serve as case studies and provide us information on different approaches to the policies at Armenian, Belarusian, Georgian, Moldovan and Ukrainian universities.

5.1. Armenian Universities

At all the universities selected for the research – Yerevan State University (YSU), American University of Armenia (AUA) and Russian-Armenian State University (RAU), internationalization is a part of the university strategy but a separate language policy paper within internationalization strategy is not available at any of these universities, and we can assume that language policy is not systemic, it is fragmented and is not based on the broader academic and professional needs of the students and the staff. Yerevan State University is the biggest higher education institution of the country where two foreign languages are compulsory throughout all the bachelor programmes. It is the leading Armenian university which adopted an internationalization strategic programme in 2017 as a result of implementation of the TEMPUS PICASA project (PICASA 2017).

At the university Russian and English are mandatory in the first two years of a bachelor programme. The content of the language syllabi is mainly linked to the academic field of the study programme. There are many programmes that require an admission test in foreign languages (it may not necessarily be English; entrants must take an admission test in French, German, Spanish or other foreign languages). There are more than 1000 courses taught in English, Russian or other foreign languages across all the Bachelors’ and Masters’ study programmes.¹

¹ List of the Courses taught in Foreign languages at YSU, http://ysu.am/uploaded/English_courses.pdf

MA programmes also provide teaching of a foreign language. The programmes are linked to the Common European Framework of References and special English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses are developed and taught within different non-linguistic study programmes. The foreign languages for non-linguists are taught with new textbooks.²³

The Centre for European Studies provides MA education in the English language. The university has training courses for students and staff to upgrade their level of foreign language proficiency. Yerevan State University is also member of the Association for Francophone Universities but French is not very well represented across the study programmes at all the levels.

Yerevan State University is the only Armenian university represented in the U-Multirank Rankings. Foreign language master programmes score 8.7%, student mobility 0.01%, international joint publications – 75.7%, international doctorate degrees – 7.82% (Yerevan State University U-MULTirank 19).

The American University provides its academic, both BA and MA programmes, in the English language, and there is no programme at this university conducted in the Armenian language. The programmes are linked to the CEFR. The university has plenty of opportunities for Erasmus+ exchange programmes and has a very comprehensive strategy for internationalization. The University is currently enrolled in the Erasmus+ BOOST project (2016-2019) to improve its strategic and marketing tools for internationalization and foster credit mobility (BOOST Project 2016-2019) .

The Russian Armenian State university provides education in the Russian language but English is also mandatory within the first year of study programme for non-professionals (4 hours of English per week), and master students also study English within their programmes where the content of language courses are mainly linked to the field of the study. The number of classes per programme is not the same as the students enrolled in BA programme in Philosophy have 4 hours per week, and the students enrolled in BA in Law – 6 hours. Even though the students enrolled in Law programme are admitted after taking a test in a foreign language, the course syllabus starts with general English course, and in the second term of the second year they study legal terminology and legal texts. The language curricula are not linked to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

The study programmes at Armenian HEIs have mobility windows only for joint or double degree master programmes (a period of time reserved for international student mobility that is embedded into the curriculum of study programme) at all three Armenian higher education institutions for students (Garam I. 2015). Armenia has a different fee policy for foreign language programmes, tuition fees for study programmes in English are around 2-3 or more times more expensive than the programmes where the language of instruction is Armenian. Yerevan State University and Russian-Armenian State University are members of the Agency of Francophone Universities which provide the students with the French language proficiency with the opportunity to participate in study and work placement exchange programmes in France and different francophone countries of Central and Western Europe.

5.2. Belarusian universities

The language policies at Belarusian universities do not very much differ from institution to institution, but a little bit vary from the other four countries under study as most of them instead of BA programme provide the so-called “higher education programmes” (long first cycle programmes) which are 4 or 5 year study programmes. In Belarus the language of instruction is Belarusian or Russian, but there are also programmes that are taught in the English language. The levels of foreign language proficiency are not

² Karapetyan K.M., Jarakyan N.G. (1990) English Textbook for Students in Law, YSU:Yerevan

³ Karapetyan K.M., Jarakyan N.G. (1990) English Textbook for Students in Law, YSU:Yerevan

linked to the CEFR, and the content, profession-oriented teaching of a foreign language is not a common case.

Belarusian State University (BSU) is the leading higher education institution of the country and it ranks 684 on Webometrics –the highest score among all the 15 universities enrolled in the current study. The university does not prioritize internationalization, mobility and foreign language policies in its strategic programme, nor does it have a special strategy on internationalization. However, all the programmes enroll two foreign languages, but they are not linked to the Common European Framework for References for Languages. Belarusian State University's library exchanges literature with 136 research and educational institutions in 24 countries. There are 8 higher education programmes (first cycle of higher education) provided in English such as business administration, marketing, Information Systems and Technologies (in Environment Sphere, in Public Health), Environmental Protection Activities (eco-management and expertise, environmental monitoring), Energy Efficient Technologies and Power Engineering Management, Medical Physics, Biomedical Science and Medical Ecology, and 20 master programmes in various fields – from Law to Computer Science, from Journalism to Medical Physics. The students enrolled in these programmes acquire profound skills in foreign language communication. The University established the Joint institute of BSU and Dalian University of technology where the language of the study programmes is Russian but the students study English and Chinese for professional communication.

In Belarusian National Technical University five foreign languages are taught – English, German, French, Spanish, Chinese and Polish. All the students are offered elective courses such as Business English, Technical Translation and Special Vocabulary. The university offers English, German, French and Spanish within training and retraining courses for the teaching staff⁴. The University has Confucius Institute on Science and Technology where the teaching and learning of Chinese is carried out with an emphasis on technical terminology.⁵

Yanko Kupala State University of Grodno was initially a state teacher training institute and the largest regional university with the enrollment of around 20000 students. Its 2 schools offer education related BA and Master programmes, and also the programmes in language teacher education. The international dimension in education, teaching, learning and research was introduced throughout the lifetime of TEMPUS Picasa project in collaboration with the partner institutions from Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine. Most of its courses at the university “are taught in Russian, but there are English-taught courses in mathematics, information technology, tourism and hospitality, international law, economics and finance” (Study in Belarus, <https://www.topuniversities.com/where-to-study/europe/belarus/guide>). The language courses are not linked to the CEFR. Like Armenian HEIs, Belarusian universities under study have a mobility window only for joint or double degree master programmes.

5.3. Georgian universities

In Georgia “the principal mission of the higher educational institutions is bringing up a citizen being competitive on the global market. This mission is particularly well accomplished by the educational establishments with high level of internationalization, i.e. those employing mobile academic and

⁴ Management Technologies and Humanitarization Faculty, http://www.bntu.by/ftug-inl/item/ftug-inl.html?fbclid=I3FW_zT6dueV7r5tchscVbs9OL-hrP7CcBDY

⁵ Confucius Institute on Science and Technology, https://en.bntu.by/confucius-institute-science-and-technology?fbclid=IwAR2z9vTcHU__fQfQl2lunKHQuGaMFLYaU4FlqIXDnOsCOPxq72CKJgDSQts

administrative staff, who are engaged in the international exchange programs, research projects and other educational activities more actively” (Chokeli E. Alpenidze O. 2015)

Strategy of internationalization of higher education in Georgia is focused on four pillars of internationalization – international students and staff, research and education activities. According to Eka Chokheli, Onise Alpenidze, “internationalization at Georgian higher education institutions is not high and the primary goal is to adapt the traditional system to the European requirements how to integrate the Georgian universities into the international environment” (Chokeli E. Alpenidze O. 2015:4).

Georgia, compared to Armenia, Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine, undertook a broad reform in school foreign language education in 2010 by inviting around 10000 native English speakers from around the world to teach to Georgian children from 5 to 16 at the national schools, and this made a very positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning of English as it has coined a new generation of Georgian bilinguals which are fluent in Georgian and English (Fahey M. 2018).

However, if we compare the figures provided by the EUROSTUDENT V survey where Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine participated, the insufficient foreign language skills for studying abroad was mentioned by a relatively big percentage of Georgian students than Armenian or Ukrainian ones:

Table 3. Obstacles to foreign enrolment for students who plan to enrol abroad in Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine

	Big obstacle			Quite big obstacle			Moderate obstacle			Small obstacle			No obstacle		
	AM	GE	UA	AM	GE	UK	AM	GE	UA	AM	GE	UA	AM	GE	UA
Insufficient skills in foreign language	19%	24.4%	11.2%	13.3%	16.9%	15.6%	18.9%	18.8%	29.8%	14.4%	20.3%	20.1%	34.4%	19.6%	23.3%

According to Eurostudent VI (2015-2018) the number of Georgian students enrolled in study-related programmes constitutes 10.4% and non-study-related programmes – 89.6% which shows that the number of students that are enrolled in the mobility programmes abroad is not very big, and it refers to such activities as studying at a foreign university, internships and temporary work placements⁶.

The admission to Georgian higher education institutions is based on the results of three entry tests, one of them is in Foreign Languages. Georgia has a different fee policy for study programmes that are introduced in Georgian and English languages. The programmes taught in English are around 3 or more times more expensive than the programmes where the language of instruction is Georgian⁷.

⁶ http://database.eurostudent.eu/#topic=mobility_type_all&countries=%5B%22GE%22%5D

⁷ https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/sites/eacea-site/files/countryfiche_georgia_2017.pdf?fbclid=IwAR09b4CDDIfdVzXRYIxejstbwuO6-Vs6uxqS8pReq2mYYvIkOYIMhsD4GPE, p.6.

As it is very well seen from the table, the results in achieving a high level of foreign language proficiency are very moderate across the country, however, internationalization and mobility rates of universities selected for our study and the language teaching and learning policies across the curricula are high. All the three universities – Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Ilia State University and Georgian Technical University, have very well-developed internationalization strategies for 2018-2024.

Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University (TSU), the leading Georgian university, has “developed about 240 academic educational programmes with 22 foreign-language and 7 dual degree programmes”. Internationalization is one of 6 core priorities specified in the Strategic Development Plan of the university (2018-2024), and language policy is the largest compared to all the other universities enrolled in this current study. Among the goals the university is planning to achieve until 2024 is “to further develop foreign-language and bilingual, joint and dual degree programs” through the increase of the number of joint and dual degree programs as well as accredited foreign-language and bilingual programmes”. There is a specific task targeted to boost the quality of foreign languages taught and learnt at the university, which enrolls the following indicators:

- “Number of measures aimed at improving foreign language teaching
- Number of foreign-language learning courses/modules/programs
- Number of learning courses delivered by foreign lecturers in their respective foreign language/languages
- Number of students studying on foreign-language learning courses/modules/programs
- Increased number of students with international foreign language certificates
- Number of latest textbooks, academic papers and scientific periodicals released in foreign languages.”

Internationalization of scientific, research and innovative activities is another goal of the university which is planned to achieve via “joint academic publications implemented in partnership with foreign higher educational institutions and research centers” and participation in joint educational and scientific-research exchange programs”.

Currently, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University has very well-established syllabi for all the faculties. As Irina Gvelesiani and Darejan Tvaltvadze state that “for the improvement of teaching foreign languages on the undergraduate level (on the example of the reforms carried out at the faculty of humanities of ivane javakhishvili tbilisi state university (Georgia), “all the curricula for the humanities (Philosophy, Philology, History, Archaeology, Ethnology, Cultural Sciences, Caucasian Studies, Oriental Studies, Art Studies, Visual Art, Educational Sciences and American Studies) are renovated, the old textbooks are replaced by the new ones. (Gvelesiani I., Tvaltvadze D. T 2011).

The syllabi for undergraduate students are linked to the CEFR, the students are supposed to reach level B2 by the end of the 8th semester and they earn 40 credits in total for learning foreign languages throughout the study programme, which allows the bachelor students acquire profound skills and competences in foreign languages. All the students in humanities “apart from one western language, should select and study one of the Classical (old Greek, Latin) or Eastern (Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Chinese, and Japanese) languages (10 – ECTS)” (Tvaltvadze D., Kurdadze R. 2011).

Ilia State University was relatively a new comprehensive university which was founded in 2006 as a result of a merger of 6 different academic institutions. Unlike Ivane Javakhishvili it does not have a comprehensive strategic plan with clearly defined priorities for internationalization and foreign language policies. The core indicators on international orientation retrieved from U-Multirank. The university scores 17.39 for foreign language bachelor programmes, 7.5 for foreign language master programmes, 0.04 for student mobility, 0.97 for international academic staff, 76.5 for international joint publications.

Georgian Technical University adopted its “Policy and Strategy for Internationalization” in 2018, and declared internationalization as its priority (p. 2, “Policy and Strategy for Internationalization”), where it was specified that “the basic purpose of GTU is to integrate in international educational environment and provide global competition, development of international awareness of the University and strengthen internationalization”⁸. And to achieve this goal, University plans to “support teaching of foreign language, among them development of e-forms.”⁹

The university offers 16 English language programmes in design, biometrical engineering, biomedical engineering, mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, business administration, agronomy, viticulture and ecology etc¹⁰. German and Russian are also introduced in the curricula as the languages of instruction for bachelor, master and doctoral programmes at GTU (Gitolendia B.2018).

Not in all the universities there is a tendency to integrate language learning and content study. There is no universal explicit goal at the universities to equip them with foreign languages for better employability. All the three Georgian universities are members of Agency of Francophone Universities and they foster the development of French language programmes at their institutions.

5.4. Moldovan universities

In Moldova all the universities have strategies on internationalization and “the top priorities for internationalization are to develop learning and teaching partnerships with other institutions, to create an internationalized study environment at home and to internationalize teaching and learning”¹¹. Lack of language proficiency is mentioned as a limit for internationalization by the students and the staff of the country. The study programmes at the universities are not linked to the CEFR. All the selected higher education institutions offer bachelor and master programmes in foreign languages, and all of them are members of the Association of Francophone Universities. If we look at the figures of U-Multirank, State University of Moldova, Foreign language bachelor programmes constitute 40.32 %, student mobility 0.1%, International joint publications – 83.7%, international doctorate degrees - 40%¹².

The Technical University of Moldova (TUM) is a broad institution where three foreign languages are taught – English, French and German. The content and language integrated learning (CLIL) methodologies are used for teaching the languages. TUM has “special groups with teaching of all the courses in one of modern languages. At the “Faculty of Computers, Informatics and Microelectronics” students may be enrolled in the programmes with French or English as the language of instruction. Information Science” and “Food technologies” (Faculty of Engineering and Management in the Food Industry), are available in French and “Computer Sciences and Electronics” with all the disciplines is taught in the English language. “Students from these branches do linguistic and specialized internships in the USA, France, Canada, Germany etc. Many of them write their bachelor thesis papers in foreign languages and the best students continue their master or doctorate education in these countries”¹³. The Department of Foreign Languages (the unit responsible for teaching and learning of foreign languages at the university) has a special purpose within a technical institution. Two foreign languages are taught - English, French, German and Russian

⁸Policy and Strategy for Internationalization”,

http://gtu.ge/Eng/Pdf/ERASMUS_GTU_Internationalization_Policy.pdf, p.2

⁹ Policy and Strategy for Internationalization”,

http://gtu.ge/Eng/Pdf/ERASMUS_GTU_Internationalization_Policy.pdf

¹⁰10 English language programs, <http://gtu.ge/Eng/Study/Eng-Lang-Educational-Programs.php>

¹¹ Internationalization of Higher Education in the Republic of Moldova: drawing country profile, http://elevate-project.md/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Elevate_1.4_Country_profile-main-document-.pdf.

¹² www.umultirank.org/study-at/technical-university-of-moldova-rankings/

¹³ <https://utm.md/en/about-us/>

with the focus to develop professional communication in architecture, constructions, economics, telecommunications, energetics, mechanics, machine building, food and light industry.

The content of the course units are focused on the development of understanding, speaking and writing skills¹⁴.

Nicolae Testemitanu State University of Medicine and Pharmacy of Moldova has a special Regulation on the internationalization of academic activities adopted in 2017. (Regulation on the internationalization of academic activities at Nicolae Testemitanu State University of Medicine and Pharmacy of the Republic of Moldova (adopted in 2017) <https://dreie.usmf.md/sites/default/files/inline-files/ACADEMIC%20INTERNATIONALIZATION.PDF> The document “is elaborated on a basis of the stipulations of “The Bologna process 2020”; The document clearly focuses on the development of foreign languages, which are used to facilitate internationalization, integration of international learning resources, access to international databases, and the demand for study opportunities abroad, which depend on language skills of students and the certification of these abilities etc. The University language policy also targets the development of joint and double programmes¹⁵”. The university has a special dental school with a 5-year and a 2-year programmes fully approved by the dental board of California (USA).

5.5. The Ukrainian universities

Language policy for internationalization is very well introduced in the Country Report of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine (Country Report of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine 2010): it clearly specifies the requirements for university students and promotes plurilingualism among them. The document states that “languages are not a secondary responsibility left to the individual initiative of the student or to the private language market, but an educational and social responsibility¹⁶”. Ukrainian is the language of instruction at the universities but foreign languages are introduced across curricula of all the study programmes and the number of hours assigned for foreign languages are from 240 to 432. English is the foreign language taught in the most of the programmes, but French, German, Italian are also introduced in the core curricula in many of the non-linguistic programmes and are built on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. The entrants take an admission test in a foreign language and language proficiency at B2 Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, and Assessment) is required to be admitted to the Ukrainian universities¹⁷

Sumy State University (SSU) is the top-performing university in Ukraine both according to Webometrics and U-Multirank¹⁸, and it is noteworthy to state that the best university is not in the capital, but Foreign language bachelor programmes score 40.98% (almost half of the programmes), foreign language master programmes 92.31% (the overwhelming majority of the programmes, student mobility -0.03%, international academic staff – 2.03%, international joint publications – 64.9%, international doctorate degrees – 0, foreign language long-list programmes - 50%. The scores speak about the high level of

¹⁴<https://utm.md/en/university-subdivisions/faculties/faculty-of-technology-and-management-in-food-industry/modern-languages-department/>

¹⁵ <https://dreie.usmf.md/sites/default/files/inline-files/ACADEMIC%20INTERNATIONALIZATION.PDF> , p.4

¹⁶ <https://rm.coe.int/language-education-policy-profile-ukraine-country-report/16807b3b4b>, p.11

¹⁷ Overview of Higher Education System, 2017) https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/sites/eacea-site/files/countryfiches_ukraine_2017.pdf, p.13.

¹⁸<https://www.umultirank.org/export/sites/default/press-media/documents/UMR-Proposal/Country-Reports-2019/UA-Country-report-2019.pdf>

internationalization at the university with a large number of study programmes available in foreign languages. The university is actively enrolled in dual and double degree programmes with special mobility windows for studying in the partner institutions abroad, but there are no mobility windows established within bachelor or master programmes where Ukrainian is the language of the instruction. SSU also promotes the Chinese language teaching and learning among its students.

National Taras Shevchenko University of Kiev elaborated its first internationalization strategy within the TEMPUS QATMI project (2009-2011) and as a result two very important documents were prepared – “State of Teaching Foreign Languages and Its Improvement in the Faculties in the fields of Natural Sciences, Physical and Mathematical Sciences, Humanities, and the Institute of Journalism: (2009) which states how “to use the experience of the best foreign universities used to enhance forms of teaching, study programmes and plans according to the implementation of the Bologna Declaration provisions”, as well as how to improve language skills of the faculty teaching in the fields of sciences for them to be able to teach in the English-taught study programmes; and “Means of Optimizing Study and Teaching Foreign Languages in Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (2010)” which provides teaching foreign languages for students (besides those majoring in Philology).

The following types of international activities were also addressed in the strategic framework of the University:

- “- writing diploma theses in foreign languages;
- joint supervision and reviewing theses”.

A new policy plan for internationalization was developed within the TEMPUS PICASA project (2014-2016)¹⁹.

Kharkiv National University V.N. Karazin is performing a policy of integration into the European knowledge society and is making an attempt to remove all the barriers that can hinder the international mobility of their students. The University is one of the leading universities in the country, which has contracts and cooperation agreements with 209 foreign organizations from 51 countries on July 1, 2015 (p.58). According to the data, “in 2014 the largest number of V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University students studied on exchange programs, double degrees in higher educational establishments of Poland (37 people), Russia (37 people) and Turkey (34 people), due to the geographical proximity of these countries”. Karazin University not only benefits from the European funding but also allocates money from the university budget on academic mobility, and 22.05% of opportunities for 2015 were covered from the university budget academic mobility – by university. According to the same source, the students from all the study programmes took part in student mobility, but not in equal proportions:

Faculty of Economics – 15.3

Faculty of Foreign Languages – 11.9

Faculty of IER and Travel Business – 17.9

Faculty of History – 4.5

Faculty of Physics and Technology – 7.5

Faculty of Physics – 6.3

Faculty of Law – 6

Other – 30.6

¹⁹ <http://ysu.am/uploaded/Brochure.pdf>

As it is well seen, the percentage of students from different non-linguistic programmes is higher than that of a linguistic study programme

The participants of the survey indicated that improving language skills is one of the chief benefits of the student mobility programme along with getting international experiences.

Karazin University has several centres and institutes – Confucius Institute, Ukrainian-Indian Centre, Ukrainian-African Academic Centre, Ukrainian-Arab Education Centre which promote development of students skills in different foreign languages, enhance mutual understanding between the people and intercultural communication.

Kharkiv National University VN Karazin's scores in U-Multirank are high for foreign language long first degree programmes where the university scores 100% which means that all the first-cycle programmes are available in a foreign language, and the second highest rank is for international joint publications –it constitutes 55.4 % which shows high proficiency rate of the teaching staff in foreign languages, especially academic writing skills for doing international joint research with foreign partner academic and research institutions.

However, the Ukrainian HEIs under study provide mobility windows only for students enrolled in joint or double degree master programmes.

6. Conclusion

When discussing foreign language policies in relation to internationalization, one must ask questions like “And what?” “Does it really matter if the foreign language policies are intervened with internationalization?” With a different linguistic situation before the fall of the Soviet Union, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine gradually changed policies shifting from Russian as a lingua franca and foreign languages which were not the part of the internationalization in these countries, to the increasing dominance of English as a lingua franca in higher education for acquiring better communicative competences as well as promoting multilingualism by taking responsibility to develop and implement academic programmes in foreign languages. This study is an attempt to look at the current state of things related to foreign language policies in internationalization through the case studies across five countries of Eastern Partnership Region – Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. As we have seen, foreign language education policy for boosting internationalization is not always a high priority on the national or institutional level in the five countries under study, and the reforms in this sphere haven't reached their apogee yet. For making it a priority it is necessary to specify the goals and tasks on the country level and then convert them concrete strategies and policies and actions on the institutional level. Based on our analysis on foreign language policies related to internationalization we can state that the processes are still fragmented and an additional capacity building is required to make the reforms more effective and the results more tangible on the language policy level. It has become obvious that internationalization in all these countries has become irreversible. The adoption of the Common European Framework of References for Languages for structuring the levels of foreign language proficiency, the implementation of foreign language courses for non-language and literature programmes, the development of foreign language academic programmes, clearly point that the countries go in the direction of the internationalization, and the decisions set for foreign languages are not weak statements of intent, but definite measures the countries take on the national and institutional level to fulfill the goals of internationalization. Of all the 15 universities Ivane Javakhishvili State University offers the largest amount of language hours for all the students and the language proficiency levels are strongly linked to the Common European Framework of References for Languages which facilitates easy recognition language credits of students throughout exchange programmes, all the processes are cohesive and in line with the strategic programme of the university. The two technical higher education institutions which are enrolled in the study – Georgian Technical University and Nicolae Testemitanu State University of Medicine and Pharmacy of Moldova have established a very efficient policy (within strategic programmes

or regulations) which significantly improved the quality of the procedures related to teaching foreign languages so as to meet the professional needs of the students and comply with the global labour market needs.

As it has become obvious throughout the research, many of the universities developed their internationalization capacity via various Tempus and Erasmus+ projects and even models of internationalization are elaborated through the cooperation with the institutions from Erasmus+ programme and partner countries. In fact, the Erasmus+ has played a key role in boosting the foreign language strategies and policies at higher education institutions in all the five countries. Belarus joined the Bologna process 10 years later than Armenia (2005), Georgia (2005), Moldova (2005) and Ukraine (2005) – in 2015, and it was obvious that it was difficult for Belarus to catch up with the reforms which had already been implemented in the four countries under study, in higher education in general, and in area the foreign language policies targeted to enhance internationalization on national and institutional level, in particular.

In fact, sufficient experience is accumulated in all the five countries of the Eastern partnership region, even not in equal proportions in all the countries. The universities should seek different opportunities to cooperate with one another so as to advance the quality of the reforms and to pace with the top universities of Europe and beyond. Even though a considerable amount of work has been done in five countries, language barrier remains to be a big or a serious obstacle for a lot of students living in Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. 5 of 15 universities are the leading universities in the countries with more or less sufficient funding for internationalization, yet there are still a lot of things are needed to be done on the policy level to accelerate a more efficient way of teaching and learning of foreign languages.

To sum up, we can assume that the education systems and universities in the post-soviet countries are still in the process of transitions and transformations, the universities need to have more capacity and commitment to improve the quality of foreign language teaching and learning especially in the area of developing special courses across different non-language study programmes. Last but not least we must mention, that in this era of global pervasive changes the concept of internationalization of universities may undergo changes every other minute, and the universities must be ready to meet this challenge and benefit from them as well as and ensure a better future for their students and graduates.

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List of Abbreviations

AUA – American University of Armenia

BA – bachelor

Belarus State University

Belarus National Technical University

CoE - The Council of Europe

GTU – Georgia Technical University

HEI - Higher education institution

CEFR – Common European Framework for Reference of Languages

CLIL - Content and Language Integrated Learning

EC- the European Commission

EHEA - European Higher Education Area

ESP - English for Specific Purposes

MA - master

RAU – Russian-Armenian State University

SSU – State University of Moldova

TSU – Tbilisi State University

TUM – Technical University of Moldova

YSU – Yerevan State University