

## Non-state Actors in Internationalizing and Localizing English in the Process of Non-formal Education in Armenia; Linguistic Analysis of Language Patterns of Democratic Style

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### Abstract

*The period following the end of World War II was distinguished with the prompt emergence of volunteer organizations, charitable associations, various types of social movements and social unions which started to have their implicit role in shaping the reality of their time. These non-governmental organizations launched a prolific activity which was often distinct with high impact locally, regionally as well as internationally in the frames of ameliorating the trends of social life and efficiently fostering the democratization processes by involving and endorsing social capital and empowering the civil society. The newly emerged social sector became a key factor in generating and shaping egalitarian practices in such developing countries as Armenia. And while carrying out a research on the role of non-governmental organizations in the democracy development processes in Armenia, we have uncovered the role and key prominence of the language use in this multifaceted educational process. It has become palpable that this process is vital in transmitting concepts, values and beliefs in democratic style from already constituted English vocabulary into Armenian relative understanding of democracy. Hence, a conclusion was made that these two seemingly different fields emanated from one another and cannot act disjointedly. Therefore, on this purpose the main research was initiated in 2015 and afterwards an investigative field work has been carried out in Armenia, which is thoroughly discussed in the current paper. Thus, the current paper discloses the key factors uncovered during the field work in Armenia, which primarily regard the dominance of English in the field, the constant translations required to be carried out permanently from English into Armenian and vice versa, the multifaceted consequences and issues that the interpretations lead to and several other crucial aspects. Indissoluble and highly prominent parts constructing the phenomenon, such as neologisms, loanwords and differences between mentality and outlook, which entail to the language and value system, are thoroughly discussed in the article.*

In today's multicultural and multilingual world where egalitarian societies and the processes addressed to shaping democracy have been universally pointed out as one of the global priorities, and where the substantial part of exchange and communication aiming at democracy building on the international platform as well as on local level is carried out by non-state actors in English, the role of the accurate language use in relation to democracy building, the precise connotative perception and appropriate patterning of English has gained a vital significance in realizing an aim that is of universal priority.

Having expanded their span of activities worldwide and establishing all-encompassing range of actions that aim at resolution of different issues globally, the non-state actors, such as Oxfam International, World Vision, Transparency International, Helsinki Committee and many other renowned international as well as regional and national organizations, have become key agents in democracy building in post-Soviet Armenia, where the field is still inchoate, utterly needing assistance, research and empowerment in order to be able to overcome the issues that directly result from the fact, that the entire transmission of democratic values and beliefs communicated to the society by the non-state actors is fulfilled in English.

Continuous shifts from English to Armenian and vice versa have become an indispensable part of the ritual in this field, accompanied by the spontaneous and random invention of previously non-existent in Armenian concepts and words, which alarms one of the main deficiencies of the field's unpreparedness resulting in generation of inconsistent and inaccurate neologism and loan words. The field is missing linguistic professionalism and expertise, mere regulations and procedures which cause confusion, misunderstanding and simply frequent failure of an NGO activity. The linguistic gap between English and Armenian, the differences between the mentality, the value system and the socio-cultural environment bring together to higher linguistic barriers which shatter the functioning of the NGO field and thus the process of democracy building in the country.

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There are no records of previous studies in the area, since the field is relatively new, therefore we have fulfilled a pioneering investigative research among the key agents in the field in regard to: primarily the linguistic changes of various texts that take place in different NGOs during the activities that enable non-formal education, secondarily the role of loanwords and neologisms used by the NGOs and the process and methods that allow the formulation of these neologisms, loanwords and the equivalents of various concepts in Armenian, and tertiary the process of NGOs localizing English and thus the appropriate interpretation and formulation of words and texts and their proper adjustment to the society's comprehension.

Marking an overall success, the research has established collaboration with more than twelve non-governmental organizations that are highly prominent in the country. The representatives of these NGOs, who are experts in the field, were interviewed for the research purposes; the interviews carried out during the fieldwork provided deep clarification and expounding on different key elements of the research, such as:

- The evident dominance of English in the field.
- The unavoidable continuousness of necessary translations to be carried out in various NGOs daily.
- The process these translations follow and the multifaceted consequences and issues that they lead to, such as:
  - a) Adaptation of completely new, previously non-existent in Armenian concepts, which is often unsuccessful.
  - b) Rapid development of the neologisms and the equivalents of various concepts in Armenian and the complications in regard to this; NGOs as the only agents in charge.
  - c) Terminological and connotative differences between various terms in English and Armenian.
  - d) Cognitive confusion caused by the conceptual inconsistencies.
  - e) Frequent failure of an NGO activity resulting from the linguistic misperceptions.
  - f) The lack of human resources and expertise for overcoming the issue.
  - g) The role of state bodies in this process.

In fact, the fieldwork has had a highly significant input in facilitating the research, since, as pointed out above, it has uncovered many central issues existing in the field. Confirming the absolute dominance of English in the sector, the fieldwork has revealed the deficiencies and the major linguistic flaws that highly hinder the functioning of the field by creating daily obstacles for the NGO members. It has disclosed the issues that result from the unceasing need of constant terminological translations from English into Armenian and vice versa. During the interviews with the experts we have discovered many issues related to communication which even worsen the situation, such as the integration of a new concept which requires not only a proper translation but a conceptual and connotative explanation and integration since many of the concepts being transmitted to the field in English are completely unknown to Armenian society. Another issue discovered was related to neologisms and the forced generation of neologism by the Language Inspectorate which makes these newly created words absolutely artificial and thus very hard for the society to perceive. The interviewees substantiated that the linguistic issues truly impede the efficiency of the NGO sector, because of the lack of proficiency and expertise, resources and decent interpreters, as well as the disregard by such state bodies as the Linguistic Inspectorate of Armenia.

It is significant to point out, that as we can see the field is relatively new and still very incondite, notwithstanding the fact of it having put down its roots fifteen years ago in Armenia and slightly for more in the world, it is still a novice, especially in Armenia. Consequently this triggers issues and creates challenges for the agents in the field. The deficiencies in the sphere are palpable; constant language interpretations that complicate the daily activities of NGOs, permanent need of competent translators, who are almost absent in the field, and this requires more financial and human resources, continuous efforts on trying to diminish the terminological inconsistency between English and Armenian, and thus the risk of frequently caused confusion and misunderstanding by the audience, are all among the issues that the NGO representatives face and have to overcome every single day in order to successfully carry out their main task: facilitating the democracy building in Armenia.

State bodies such as the Language Inspectorate are absolutely not functional, since they continuously impose new rules rather than helping the field construct. Therefore, the maintenance

of such important activities such as the creation of neologisms and the adaptation of the general process and the value system for the audience to be capable of perceiving and conveying the newly acquired egalitarian practices and beliefs in the country, is either completely left to the representatives of the NGO sector, or officially and totally artificially assisted by trivial aid demonstrated by state bodies.

Therefore, the field necessarily needs assistance, research and empowerment, in order to be able to overcome the issues that directly result from the fact, that the entire transmission of democratic values and beliefs communicated to the society by the non-state actors is fulfilled in English.

And so, language needs huge input and continuous efforts in order to find ways of leading the process more productively, the audience needs permanent enablement from the part of the NGOs and professional linguists for breaking down the linguistic barrier together with the social-cultural one, and the state bodies need enforcement and drastic changes in their role and activities in order to be able to truly assist the NGOs.

Overall, assessing the benefits and the key assets that the social sector brings into the social life of Armenian people, and witnessing the unsparing efforts made by the NGO representatives, we can say that the field is a general success, notwithstanding the linguistic challenges and the perpetual contribution for overcoming these challenges. However, the field definitely needs to be granted steadfast support and examination from the non-governmental bodies, experts, specialized linguists and researchers, as well as the government.

And the fieldwork carried out in Armenia, has proved the imperative need of a thorough research in the field; the interviewed organizations have confirmed the existence of various issues that our research addresses, which are stated above, as well as the implication of an in-depth research, examination and enforcement in order to be able to operate accurately, more proficiently and coherently and most importantly to deliver more efficient results in a sphere that is vital for the general development, progress and growth of Armenia.

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