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Bilingualism and Language Policy as Key Factors for TESOL

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Abstract:
This article examines bilingualism and its levels in terms of the extent of both languages' use. The levels and various definitions of bilingualism are considered as important points of teaching strategy adoption. Special attention is given to the functional classification of bilingualism and its importance for L2 (the second language) teaching. Teaching methods and techniques are analyzed, namely the direct and bilingual methods which are regarded to be the crucial decision making factors for the modern second or foreign language teacher. The degree of positive impact on language acquisition created by the exclusive use of the TL (target language) in a language classroom, students and teachers' motivation as well as teaching/learning effectiveness in direct and bilingual teaching approaches are also investigated. Language policy and language planning are examined as well, since they are regarded to be crucial factors influencing language situation in a particular country and setting priorities in language education.

Introduction

The modern world and growth in tourism, international cooperation in all spheres of life all require a constant search for improved language teaching and learning methods which is of paramount importance for Ukraine striving for political and economic independence, whose desired competitiveness in the world economy demands rapid growth in the level of education in general and professional higher education in particular, education for adults, increase and updating of in-service training, post-graduate education, etc.

The present work will examine bilingualism and multilingualism in its two dimensions, that is, in the context of educational experiences and life skills adopted by bilinguals or multilinguals. Nevertheless, all dimensions of such sociolinguistic phenomena are interdependent and prove to be intermingled mostly without notice of the language learners or users. Still those factors are of significant importance for teaching foreign languages in terms of selecting and combining teaching strategies as those best suitable for bilinguals (or multilinguals).

Bilingualism and multilingualism can also be considered to some extent as the target of education. This has been stated by the EU and the Council of Europe and it regards language competence or awareness in at least two foreign languages to be highly advisable for all the citizens of the EU, since language competence is regarded as one of

the basic skills that all EU citizens need to acquire in order to improve their educational and employment opportunities within the European learning society, in particular by making use of the right to freedom of movement of persons. Within the framework of education and vocational training policy, therefore, the EU's objective is for every citizen to master two languages in addition to his or her mother tongue. In order to achieve this objective, children are to be taught two foreign languages at school from an early age (COM /2008/ 0566: 4).

1. Language policy and education within the framework of European integration

Bilingualism is also accompanied by the EU policy connected with the national identity, meaning that the EU members aspire to be united by the knowledge of foreign languages and by means of proper knowledge of other language and culture ensure preserving their national identity. The above mentioned statement proves to be mostly an advantage due to the wider perspective language learners (or users) and teachers can take in the process of language teaching and acquisition which provide acquiring not only greater language competence but also extensive life skills and experience, more opportunities for receiving and processing information from a more diverse number of sources.

In general, in Ukraine there is a strong tendency to increasing the level of foreign language mastery both in secondary and higher education, which can be mostly explained by the development of international relations in the direction of the European integration. The process of integration and language policy are significantly influenced by the European principles in the given sphere.

The Council of Europe has analyzed the significance of communication and interaction for social cohesion among member States in its White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue and this has informed the vision of and policies for 'Plurilingual and Intercultural Education' as presented in the 'Platform of Resources and References for Plurilingual and Intercultural Education' (White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue 2008: 29).

2. Language planning

Speaking of the language policy it is necessary to discuss language planning which always takes place both on official and non-official levels. Language planning is a series of measures taken to influence the function, structure, or acquisition of languages within a community. Planning or improving effective communication can also lead to other social changes such as language shift or assimilation, thereby providing another motivation to plan the structure, function and acquisition of languages (J. Cobarrubias 1983: 17).

Language planning and language policy are closely interrelated since language planning comprises various types of planning, such as prestige planning, standardization planning, acquisition or educational planning and others; and also proper treatment of multilingualism in education and other life spheres. Language planning is mostly regarded to be the domain of governmental organizations, nevertheless it can be greatly influenced by non-governmental organizations as well as by individuals and their communicative activities. Thus, it is necessary to ensure proper language policy and planning for the best benefit to citizens and their country in the modern language situation where bilingualism and multilingualism play a major role as those representing modern society values, such as claimed by the European Union.

For this purpose, the article aims at thorough examination of bilingualism. However, first of all the authors intend to provide definitions of bilingualism and its levels which gives more opportunity for understanding the nature of the given phenomenon.

3. Definition of bilingualism and principles of classification

Bilingualism is usually defined as the use of two languages by an individual though the level of language awareness and the extent of its use may vary considerably between separate individuals. The term bilingualism is closely related to the term bilingual which describes a person who uses more than one language in different spheres of life.

There are many ways to provide classification for bilingualism or define its levels. According to B. Klein (2014: 1) one of the tendencies is to classify bilingualism according to the age of an individual:

1. Early Bilinguals further subdivided into:
   - Simultaneous Bilinguals where both languages are acquired simultaneously;
   - Sequential Bilinguals where the second language (L2) was acquired after the first one (L1);
   - Late bilinguals
2. There is also a classification according to skills though there are no clearly defined levels:
   - Passive bilingual where a person is a native speaker in one language and is capable of understanding but not speaking another language.
   - Dominant Bilingual where a person is more proficient in one or two languages (in most cases native-like).
   - Balanced Bilingual where a person is more or less equally proficient in both languages, but will not necessarily pass for a native speaker in both languages.
   - Equilingual where a person uses both languages fluently however not necessarily with native-like proficiency

There are also other ways to define types or levels of bilingualism (e.g. by spheres of language use or by separate language skills in which bilinguals perform with higher, lower proficiency or sometimes even have no skills).

4. Language status

The acceptance of integration by European citizens depends to a large extent on their ability and willingness to participate in a European public discourse. Here, proficiency in English as a possible and reliable interlingual mediator and the equality of people's linguistic identities are interdependent factors which both originate in the history of modern Europe. "Consideration must therefore be given to ways of finding the necessary balance in order to manage the potential conflicts between the equal status of languages and the need to differentiate between them" (N.Y. Todorova 2006: 5).

That is why equal prestige should be given to both the mother tongue or L1 and L2 (or a foreign language) not only in official documents, but first of all, in interpersonal relations and all spheres of life as well as in language classrooms.

5. Teaching methodology

Bilingualism and methods of TEFL (teaching English as a foreign language) or TESOL (teaching English to speakers of other languages) are closely interrelated and should be certainly considered in their complex since bilingualism can be a factor influencing the language learner (or user) as well as the teacher, who, if not a natural (or early) bilingual, becomes a bilingual in their professional sphere and has to make decisions on the ways to teach a language (E. Macaro 2001: 538). Here we will consider the use of the mother tongue or L1 in the foreign language classroom. In methodology there are also different ways to classify teaching methods of teaching English as a foreign language. The most general classification can be presented by three mainstream methods:
- Grammar-translation method
- Direct method
- Bilingual method

Attention is also given to the communicative approach which faces a certain criticism in the present methodology.

6. Monolingual versus bilingual methods of teaching foreign languages

For decades, language teachers were instructed to use the TL exclusively in the foreign language classroom. The theory and practice of foreign language teaching and learning were focused on the major task of maximum language exposure or immersion, regarded as basic principles required for successful language acquisition. This certainly brought considerable results and was claimed to be as unanimously right, which was justified by its similarity to the natural way children learn their mother tongue, immigrants learn a foreign language in, for instance, English speaking countries within a short period of time of their stay in foreign countries where they are exclusively exposed to a foreign language. Until recently this method (monolingual or direct) was regarded as a must for successful and qualified teachers and using their native language or students' native language as a language of instruction, if not completely eliminated, was to be avoided to a maximum with the only exception made for lower levels of study where L1 instruction has been tolerated (C.J. Dodson 1967/1972: 1).

Nevertheless, practice gives us numerous examples of situations when to avoid using the mother tongue (or L1) is, if not quite impossible, then next to impossible. The question has arisen many times and constantly arises in, for instance EFL classrooms, when the situation requires thorough translation, giving equivalents in L1, drawing comparisons between L1 and L2 (or FL) to make sure students possess proper understanding of foreign vocabulary and grammar. Even teaching pronunciation often requires the use of L1 to ensure best results (J. Cummins/ K. Brown/ D. Sayers 2007: 235).

That is why there has been a number of critical publications on the direct or monolingual method since great attention is paid to the learner's environment and the ways students acquire language skills. Opponents of the direct method claim that language learners in the language classroom cannot learn in a natural way or the way children learn their first language along with life skills and world comprehension because "prior knowledge is encoded in their L1". What we need to do as language

teachers is "teach for transfer" so as to take active control over the learning process through metacognitive strategies (J. Cummins/ K. Brown/ D. Sayers 2007: 231).

Viewing L1 as potentially valuable resources instead of a mere source of interference opens up a greater pedagogical space and hence may bear constructive implications for L2 instruction, especially in homogenous contexts where both teachers and learners share the same MT and TL (An E. He 2012, 2: 1). The bilingual method was introduced by C.J. Dodson (1967) as a counterpart of the audiovisual method with systematic use of L1 which was task based providing texts and dialogues were accompanied by pictures.

The tendency to use L1 in teaching an FL has brought up one more issue which is generally referred to as code-switching. Code-switching is a transfer from one language to another in the course of communication either intentionally or spontaneously. Often code-switching is resorted to because of the lack of competence in a foreign language but if to consider modern teaching methods, code-switching is already referred to as a tool for achieving more opportunities for language acquisition.

The concept of code-switching is most commonly used within the sociolinguistic field of studies and it is commonly used by bilingual speakers often to signal two different identities at once.

V.J. Cook (2001: 410) also mentions that although the use of the target language should be promoted, exclusive use of the target language limits the possibilities of language teaching, and the L1 should be considered and used as a helpful tool to help foreign language teachers create "authentic users of the TL".

Regarding switching languages or codes in the actual teaching of foreign languages, the L1 can and should be used as a resource in foreign language classrooms. V.J. Cook (2001: 415) argues that "teachers should resort to the L1 if it is apparent that using the target language would be inefficient and/ or problematic for the learner" and when "the cost of the TL is too great". Studies have shown that the most common reason for teachers switching codes has been to contrast the target language and the L1 to hinder any possible negative transfer (M. Turnbull/ K. Arnett 2002: 208).

With some planning it can be ensured that learners carry their insights from one language into another. This could – at least in the long run – be expanded to the level of awareness about the features of a generalized academic language use, with perceptions of differences and distinctions between subjects and disciplinary traditions accordingly (An E. He 2012: 1–2).

Nevertheless, best gains of previous theories have to be retained and developed but not completely rejected. One of them is communicative approach with its idea of social interaction which still has a central role in modern language teaching as well as learning extensively described by sociolinguistic theories. Many theories have shown positive outcomes of socially interacting with others when learning languages. Children learn their mother tongue by hearing people in their surroundings speak with each other, and to some extent to the infant, however with some deviations to their 'normal' language. This is the first step of language acquisition, which is when a person learns unconsciously, in difference to language learning which is conscious learning (P. Lightbown/ N. Spada 2006: 201, 203).

When one has mastered the basic skills of their language, they will continue to learn other skills e.g., conventions of conversations, writing, etc. This also applies to older

students learning a new language or expanding their knowledge of one they already know. When exposed to a language, e.g. spoken and/ or written, the students have to adapt to that particular situation and use the target language, even though the lack of proficiency is at a different level than what they encounter. (P. Lightbown/ N. Spada 2006: 208).

Communicative methodology stresses the English-only approach to presentation and practice that is such a prominent feature of the British EFL tradition. (Perhaps because this has made it possible for us to teach English all over the world without the disagreeable necessity of having to learn other languages?) This is a peculiar state of affairs. It is a matter of common experience that the mother tongue plays an important part in learning a foreign language. Students are always translating into and out of their own languages and teachers are always telling them not to. Interlanguages notoriously contain errors which are caused by interference from the mother tongue. It is not always realized that a large proportion of the correct features in an interlanguage may also contain a mother tongue element. In fact, if we did not keep making correspondences between foreign language items and mother tongue items, we would never learn foreign languages at all. "Imagine having to ask whether each new French car one saw was called 'voiture', instead of just deciding that the foreign word was used in much the same way as 'car' and acting accordingly" (M. Swan 1985: 3).

When we set out to learn a new language, we automatically assume (until we have evidence to the contrary) that meanings and structures are going to be broadly similar to those in our own language. The strategy does not always work, of course – that is why languages are difficult to learn – and it breaks down quite often with languages unrelated to our own. But on balance this kind of 'equivalence assumption' puts us ahead of the game; it makes possible for us to learn a new language without at the same time returning to infancy and learning to categorize the world all over again. If, then, the mother tongue is a central element in the process of learning a foreign language, why is it so conspicuously absent from the theory and methodology of the Communicative Approach? Why is so little attention paid, in this and other respects, to what learners already know? The Communicative Approach seems to have a two-stage approach to needs analysis: "1. find out what the learner needs to know; 2. teach it. A more valid model, in our view, would have four stages: 1. find out what the learner needs to know; 2. find out what he or she knows already; 3. subtract the second from the first; 4. teach the remainder" (M. Swan 1985: 4).

At the same time there is an important aspect of the bilingual method is the acknowledgement it gives to the importance and the validity of the student's L1 language and culture. Language learning is one of the most enriching experiences we can have as human beings. It isn't merely the substitution of one means of communication for another. The bilingual method ensures accessibility. Students beginning the daunting task of learning a new language can immediately find a level of familiarity, avoiding the terrors of that "deer in the headlights" stage of acquiring new skills (L. Calkins McCormick 1994: 239).

Though the bilingual method employs the students' native language, it is important to note that it is predominantly the teacher who makes use of L1. This distinguishes it from the grammar-translation method which relies more on rote learning and the

translation of texts. The bilingual method focuses more on using the language for oral communication. Students will not be using their native tongue much in the classroom.

As with the direct method, basic texts make use of picture strips to accompany the dialogue. The bilingual method makes use of the written form of the language from the start. This allows students to begin to see the shapes of words as they repeat them orally (E. Bialystok 2006: 3).

7. Bilingualism, multilingualism and the problem of national identity in the Ukrainian institutions of higher education

Special attention needs to be paid to the presence of bilingualism or not rarely multilingualism in the establishments of higher education in Ukraine. It has been observed for decades in Ukraine and other post-Soviet countries that higher education still retains a number of key principles inherited from the Soviet era where bilingualism was present in all the republics with the domination of the Russian language in the sphere of science and education as well as in most other spheres of professional activities, culture and arts.

In the past most students were faced with the fact of lectures read in Russian and textbooks available mostly in Russian. Consequently, the majority of people over thirty can be considered bilingual to a certain extent depending on their place of residence and especially the sphere of professional activity. Still all students who study a foreign language can be considered bilingual to a certain degree, at least, in academic or professional spheres. Though, the influence of the Russian language and culture as well as the Soviet ideology in the post-Soviet countries have been declining for decades, in Ukraine in particular, it still persists in some regions (for instance, Eastern, Central and Southern parts of the country) where Russian-speaking citizens are often a majority. On the other hand, there is a strong tendency to use Ukrainian, especially in public life due to the changing political situation in the country (V. Kulyk 2010: 81).

The tendency of more people using Ukrainian is here explained not rarely by a wish to show their own national identity and unite the country though the language situation is certainly not so unambiguous, which certainly demands much attention from the authorities. The above mentioned campaign for re-establishing the Ukrainian language as the language of state, education, science and culture has been pursued for years up since it has not been once used by political campaigners as the means of public opinion shifting in favour of either pro-Russian or pro-European political courses.

Though a number of negative assumptions towards the influence of bilingualism (multilingualism) on language acquisition exist in various fields of science, the authors support the idea of positive influence of bilingualism on the process of language acquisition though the fact of the necessity of certain approaches cannot be rejected.

About seventy students of the 1st and 2nd years of study at Lviv Ivan Franko National University and Lviv Life Safety University were observed for more than two years. About 20% of whom were of mixed language background, mostly because of mixed-language families or having moved for studying from Russian language dominated regions, can be regarded as functional bilinguals and even multilinguals since the fact they have studied English as a foreign language both at school and university not only in Ukraine. Some of them have experience as exchange students abroad in the USA and Austria.

During the period of observation most bilingual students showed good performance, though a number of former exchange students had some difficulties predominantly in grammar, probably due the difference in education systems or the environments they had lived in. Their vocabulary inadequacy was also present to a lower extent. Other students, who gained their education only in Ukraine, showed more or less even performance in English classrooms, some of them having more difficulties in translation from English into Ukrainian due to the different backgrounds. Also, the direct method (R.K.T Callan 2005), which demands the exclusive use of the TL, was applied to teaching of first year students. Nevertheless, with lower level students, occasional translation of vocabulary or even full sentences was necessary, some grammar rules also had to be explained partially in Ukrainian though most of the time the language of instruction was English and all tasks were also completed in English.

8. Conclusion

In the light of the above, the language policy and language planning are necessary to examine the suggestions for improved language policy. Consequently, some innovations and recommendations for language teaching techniques and approaches are to be suggested and hopefully introduced into a number of EFL (or TESOL) classrooms.

In conclusion it is necessary to point out that there cannot be a single use of separate methods in teaching foreign languages since the language in itself is a means of communication and is constantly adjusted to people's needs in various life spheres. That is why bilingualism as well as the bilingual method deserve proper attention from researchers, government officials, non-governmental organizations as well as language teachers and users in the common effort to bring the most advantage to language acquisition.

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