

BILINGUALISM AND BICULTURALISM AND TEACHING OF MODERN LANGUAGES: POINT OF VIEW OF A TEACHER OF FRENCH FROM RUSSIA

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Abstract

More than 50% of the world's inhabitants are bilingual, and this percentage is expected to be increasing due to the increasing global mobility. Some people are bilingual because of the characteristics of their families, others because of migration, or because they live in a border area or a country that has several languages. Bilingualism is extremely widespread in Russia and in France.

An important role in this is played by specific historical and geographic and economic factors of the development of the nation. Here you can talk about the bilingual willy-nilly or the bilingual by birth. In any case, these factors should be taken into account when planning the educational process, recruitment of teachers and a contingent of students.

This phenomenon is multifaceted and therefore thoroughly studied in various aspects by a multitude of sciences, among which, besides linguistics, are psychology, pedagogy, sociology and others. Hundreds of works have been written about it, but at the same time – again due to its multifaceted nature – there are still many unresolved or resolved issues not up to the end.

Keywords: Bilingualism, Biculturalism, Bicompetence, Language Model, Interlingual Deviation, Foreign language teaching.

Introduction.

In a cultural situation of the modern world, connected with the migration of the population, there are more and more people speaking and thinking in two or more languages. The phenomenon of bilingualism appeared about a hundred years ago, but nowadays it is rethought and supplemented with new features and characteristics.

The phenomenon of bilingualism does not allow describing it as strictly ordered: «The desire for the rule of freedom over all forms of necessity is the main stimulus of human activity, a life impulse, which determines the development of culture from within» [Sedykh, 2008]. Meanwhile, bilingualism, for example in translation activity, is the most important component of the creation of adequate interpretation, taking into account the ethno-cultural factors of the text space [Vigel, 2014]. In this article, the actual and complex phenomenon of bilingualism in the contemporary cultural situation, in particular in the teaching of foreign languages, is considered.

Language bilingual model and foreign language teaching.

Speaking about the language model of bilingual, one can say that he (bilingual) is in a special intermediate or bilingual language model when there is a deviation of languages. Deviation is a language specific form that is different from what is supposed to be [Alefirenko, 2014]. Deviation can occur at all levels of the language (phonetic, lexical, syntactic, semantic or pragmatic). There are two types of deviation:

- Static deviation in which constant features of changes from one language to another are reflected (for example, accent, expansion of value of separate words, specific syntactic structure, etc.)

- Dynamic deviation, which is an ephemeral invasion of another language (manifested in accidental misses of a stressful situation, instant use of syntactic structures not previously used). If bilingual is fluent in one language, then a weak knowledge of the second language can be attributed to the interlanguage deviation from the first [Sedykh, 2013].

Interlingual deviation is manifested in the use of forms of regular verbs as forms of irregular verbs, the refusal to use plural nouns, not observing times, omitting functional words, simplifying syntax, deliberate non-use of certain words and word combinations, etc. It should be noted that both types of deviations, although sometimes quite obvious (such as a foreign accent), usually do not interfere with communication. This is because bilinguals develop their languages according to the level of fluency required by the environment. Deviations in bilingual speech thus have a character of uncertainty and reservations. They take place present, but usually do not affect the communication.

In the bilingual model, initially bilinguals acquire a «basic» or «matrix» language. The choice of the language is a well-studied skill (bilingual seldom consciously asks the question: In what language should I communicate with this person?). Usually, bilinguals interact with other bilinguals in everyday life. Psychological and sociolinguistic factors of interaction contribute to the choice of the second language. Once the main language has been selected, bilingual can enter another language in various ways. The main way is a code inclusion, when words, phrases, sentences are first studied, in order to be completely included to the second language.

The notion of bilingualism.

The notion of bilingualism has nothing to do with the mere knowledge of a language. Indeed, bilingual people have never been conscious of being a part of a learning process [Trescheva, 2012]. One can speak of native bilingualism when, in a family, the father and mother do not speak the same language or have had to go into exile. But bilingualism can also be provoked: some families, anxious to give a foreign teaching to their children, used, for example, a foreign governess.

One wonders whether a bilingual person speaks both the languages he or she uses. Moreover, we have not defined what «speaking a language well» could mean. The research that has been conducted, distinguishes different forms of bilingualism. We speak of balanced bilingualism when the person has the same level of knowledge of both languages. This bilingualism is, in fact, very rare. In contrast, we speak of bi-lingual dominance when one can see an advantage of one language over another. But in all cases, the bilingual individual uses the two languages he knows without difficulty [Trescheva, 2010].

Today, more than 50% of the world's inhabitants are bilingual, and this percentage is expected to be increasing due to the increasing global mobility. Some people are bilingual because of the characteristics of their families, others because of migration, or because they live in a border area or a country that has several languages. Bilingualism is extremely widespread in France [Charaudeau, 2014].

Some concepts are close to that of bilingualism. Bilingualism is referred to when one refers to the competence of the individual, whereas the word «bilingualism» refers to the sociological aspect. The term «diglossia» is used when the person has mastery of a language imposed in a political context. For example, it is a question of the co-operation between Creole and French in the overseas departments.

The specialists also speak of bilingualism of juxtaposition, for example for Switzerland, a country which remains monolingual even if the languages are not identical in each canton, or bilingualism of superposition when the languages mingle and coexist in the same space.

The notion of biculturalism.

Nobody would argue today that language is not simply an arbitrary vector of a thought, but that it automatically refers to culture. Language is marked by civilization, on the one hand because it is a socio-historical product and, on the other, because it is always a social practice: no civilization exists independently of language.

The bilingual and bicultural individual is someone who not only speaks several languages but is also able to move from one culture to another. We think these people are capable of great openness to others and to the world. But we must not believe that bilingualism is a solution to all problems of misunderstanding. It seems to us, however, that the world of tomorrow would be different if this subject of bilingualism and biculturalism were more widely considered.

School bilingualism.

We speak of school bilingualism when two languages are used in schools as vectors of instruction, when the subjects are taught in both languages. For example French establishments abroad can therefore be considered as models from this point of view there.

School bilingualism, therefore, does not correspond to learning several languages at school, but rather to studying different disciplines, such as history or biology, in two languages. School bilingualism encompasses very different realities. The notion of bilingualism automatically leads to that of biculturalism. It is therefore the openness of our schools that is at stake, that is, openness to cultural otherness and the awareness of the artificial nature of monolingualism.

By placing a very young child in a bilingual universe, he is given more intellectual opportunities to understand the mechanics of a language. Indeed, when one speaks only one language, he does not reflect on the process of learning that language. On the other hand, the person who uses two languages since childhood instinctively reflects on learning the mechanisms of language, which makes it easier for him to learn other languages.

The challenges of bilingualism.

Bilingualism presents four major issues. The first takes part in the necessary adaptation of the school to the evolution of society. As one contemporary writer put it: there is no longer «*étrangeté pour l'étranger*» [Kristeva, 1988]. The foreigner is everywhere today, on television, on the radio, on the Internet. The school is therefore caught up in reality. If we do not want it to fall behind, it seems to us that the divorce between school and languages should be avoided at all costs. Curiously, it is soon the non-linguistic competence that will become strangeness.

Secondly, the globalization of trade or the market economy will have the following effect: there will be less and less need for multilingual diplomats but more and more technicians, computer scientists, artisans or biologists, who will handle several languages perfectly. The economic stake lies in our capacity to train French people who can go to work in a foreign country and understand the tricks of a language, the unspoken that will arise in the conversation.

The third issue is political. The Council of Europe has made two recommendations on languages. The objective of the 1982/88 recommendation on European multilingualism was that all categories of the population had the means to acquire knowledge of a language of another Member State. The purpose of the 1990/1995 Recommendation was to develop bilingual education and the teaching of one or more subjects in a non-mother tongue. According to many experts, the aim would be to train a trilingual European citizen. The French have a lot of work to do to meet this challenge, even if the French universities have already registered in this dynamic [Pruvost, 2017].

Finally, if a culture of plurilingualism does not settle quickly in Europe, English will be the only foreign language in the XXI century. The battle for plurilingualism is therefore also a battle for a different worldview. The more we defend not only the teaching of French in the world but also the teaching of languages other than English, the more France will appear as a cultural and political alternative. The current world is in danger of encountering two pitfalls: that of British standardization and that of the «Tower of Babel». The demands of linguistic minorities, such as Corsica or Breton in France, are so strong that the place of languages in education is indeed a burning issue.

The typology of bilingual teaching.

The typology of bilingual teaching varies according to the age of the pupils. The question is whether to begin teaching a language to a child from kindergarten, between the ages of 7 and 10, as is the case in Quebec, Northern Europe and French international sections, or from the second degree.

The method may also be different. Should the child be immersed in a progressive «bath», teaching the language before using it in another discipline? Or should the pupil be brutally introduced into a double system, with certain subjects immediately taught in a foreign language? The latter solution corresponds to the Canadian immersion model or to instruction in French institutions abroad.

8. The problem of modern languages teaching in Russia.

The problem of language teaching in Russia is twofold in schools and universities. If the student is to be bilingual, it is a matter of knowing how to teach French well. Indeed, the pupil is already 80% immersed in his native language, whether in the playground, in his family, on radio or on television [Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2001]. We think we need to go deeper into this issue of foreign language teaching, particularly in French. We will merely raise the following questions:

- Should Russian teachers have skills in French as a foreign language?
- Should the use of the mother tongue be allowed in the classes in certain cases? Is this practice useful or should it be prohibited?
- What measures can be taken to immerse students in the «bath» of French?
- What relations to maintain with the French community of the foreign country? How to use TV5 and RFI? From this point of view, the problem is the same for all the teachers of French that exist in the world. We think that a better communication between the teachers of French schools and the teachers of modern languages in Russia would be very beneficial. For example, some Russian professors could be assigned liaison duties with teachers of French who belong to other networks and with foreign language specialists.

We propose to give a brief overview of the various general improvement possibilities in the teaching of modern languages:

- **Increase the number of hours**

Some countries do manage to do better than France in language teaching, but at the cost of heavy sacrifices, since spending nearly 50% of school time on languages, as in Luxembourg, is to the detriment of time and results in other materials. Time is not built.

On the other hand, in these countries so often cited as examples by the media, results are always evaluated on the level in English ... because these countries, instead of privileging linguistic diversity as (formerly) France, have clearly chosen English as the vehicular language of Europe. They are often small countries (in number of inhabitants), and it is clear that small countries more often learn foreign languages than countries whose language has a more international scope such as English, French, German, Spanish, Chinese, Russian ... Also they are often countries with several national languages: Switzerland, Luxembourg, India etc. Any comparison with these countries is therefore abusive, distorted at the base.

- **Start earlier**

The summary is simple: at present, there is no choice of language at primary level, neither by parents nor by pupils. It is English that is imposed in more than 80% of cases; sometimes German as in Alsace, even in some colleges near Spain or Italy, under a bilateral agreement of the two countries to support each other in their decline in the face of English; sometimes the regional language.

In any case - repeating does not hurt it - talking about choices at the primary level is a big lie. Let us say things as they are: the recent reform in France is preparing a royal road to the all-English, the «tunnel to English». The current system of initiation to primary school in France and Russia is an early specialization; in short, the problem is political: must English become compulsory? This is the real question, the one we refuse to discuss: to choose between all-English and linguistic diversity [Sedykh, A.P., 2015].

- **Teaching certain subjects in a foreign language**

This is already taking place in various forms in France and Germany. The generalization of this idea, which can seduce at first sight, presents many difficulties:

- One does not imagine that everyone should be taught history in English, math in Italian, physics in Spanish, etc., at the risk of poor student achievement. This can only be done on a voluntary basis, as in the so-called European classes.

- It is incontestable that one thinks better in his main language, therefore risks less good academic results.

- The particular case of the university.

Some Nordic countries (Sweden, Norway) teach directly in English in some university courses. It is again a political question. And there is also a long-term risk to the national language of an impoverishment of specialized vocabulary.

At a time when Unesco is almost speaking of the right to receive instruction in its own language, at a time when so many languages in the world are threatened, generalizing the teaching of subjects in a foreign language would be an aberration, and an obstacle, added to the learner, who in general already has enough to cross. This can only be envisaged for regional languages or volunteers, as is already the case.

- **Do more oral practice**

The mediocre results of the teaching of languages would depend on methods: it would require more oral. This is the current leitmotiv. However, this is not even a novelty: language booths had in their time been announced as technical progress that would change everything ... And the teachers did not wait for the guidelines to include info, video, Skits with students, etc. But one cannot progress only by speaking and memorizing sentences in blocks. Language learning is a complex progression where writing, oral and memory go hand in hand; establishing neurological connections whose organization is still unknown to us, neither in detail nor even approximately. The high-dose oral is not the universal panacea announced, but it is the new credo of the pedagogues of the Ministry of National Education until the next miracle method.

- **More movies in original version on TV**

This does not concern education, since it is extra-curricular time, but still it can influence learning languages due to the «pure» speaking and country-studying that we would have taken from other countries.

In most cases, films are used for entertainment or education, preferably both at the same time, but rarely for evening classes throughout life. The only option that would seem legitimate would be the multichannel broadcast, with a choice of many languages. This solution would also have the effect of fostering a more diversified cultural offer.

- **Bring in native teachers**

The idea of native-speaking teachers seems to be rather effective and worth practicing. Native teachers have a strong ability to motivate students for hard-working, eliminating interest to the process, improving phonetics and oral speaking skills, investigating foreign culture and life style.

We should bring in native teachers both for a longtime period and for brief practice seminars. In the first case it would allow to create a constant system of studying «original» foreign language, which will result in a higher level of speaking practice for students. In the second case it will give them a possibility of been more interested in foreign (French) language, of getting an idea of improving knowledge. Both cases seem to be important.

- **Teachers' bicompetence**

At the primary level, we talk about using the personal skills of each language teacher, for those who have not validated a language as it is now. This proposal does not solve anything, and induces a great mess, because the offer of language would come from chance and lottery, depending on the assignment of teachers and their language skills.

9. Conclusions.

So, bilingualism is a widespread phenomenon inherent in the history of human relations for a long time and is becoming more and more large-scale recently. At the same time, bilingualism has been and remains a peculiar phenomenon of culture, thanks to which, in many ways, the evolution of society is proceeding. This phenomenon is multifaceted and therefore thoroughly studied in various aspects by a

multitude of sciences, among which, besides linguistics, are psychology, pedagogy, sociology and others. Hundreds of works have been written about it, but at the same time – again due to its multifaceted nature – there are still many unresolved or resolved issues not up to the end.

There are some possibilities in improving the teaching of foreign languages in Russia. If a student is to be bilingual, the following ways of teaching languages should be used: increase the number of hours, start earlier, teaching certain subjects in a foreign language, do more oral practice, use more movies in original version, bring in native teachers.

Thus, the results, achieved in the system of bilingual education, should influence contemporary cultural and social situation in the sphere of international communication and cross-cultural relations.

10. Short summary.

1. For the concept of bilingualism, the conclusion about the manifestations of interdiscursivity both at the macro level, in the model of teaching communication in general, and at the micro level, in the discourse unit is theoretically significant.

2. In addition to the ideological, developing and coordinating functions, it is possible to distinguish an educational function that is leading with the subordinate role of the others. In the process of foreign language teaching, there are three types of links - information-content, operational-activity and organizational-methodical, and the leading type of communication is information-content.

3. Bilingualism is certainly a natural and rapidly spreading phenomenon of intercultural communication in modern society that cannot be resisted and whose consequences are still difficult to predict. Bilingualism is undoubtedly of great interest both for scientists and for all those who are striving for mastering another language in order to carry out real speech communication with carriers of other cultures.

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