

Methodology of linguistics. Methods and means (UDC 81-13)

DOI: 10.18454/RULB.4.18

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РАЗВИТИЕ ПОЛИЛИНГВАЛЬНОЙ ЛИЧНОСТИ ПРИ ОБУЧЕНИИ ВТОРОМУ ИНОСТРАННОМУ ЯЗЫКУ*Аннотация*

В статье анализируются понятия полилингвизма и полилингвальной личности, которые сопоставляются с концепциями мультилингвизма (многоязычия) и мультилингвальной (многоязычной) личности, а также рассматриваются с позиций теорий билингвизма. Статья выдвигает мнение, что формирование и развитие полилингвальной личности может трактоваться как одна из ключевых целей обучения второму иностранному языку, и намечает направление для развития концепции полилингвизма, требующей выявления и формулирования характеристик полилингвальной личности, обусловленных, с одной стороны, спецификой процесса освоения второго иностранного языка, с другой – необходимостью формирования навыков стратегического управления дисбалансом, вызываемым различиями в уровнях языковой и культурной компетентности у полилингвов, изучающих несколько иностранных языков в условиях субординативного трилингвизма.

Ключевые слова: полилингвизм, полилингвальная личность, многоязычие, билингвизм, обучение второму иностранному языку.

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DEVELOPING PLURILINGUAL IDENTITY IN THIRD LANGUAGE CLASSROOM*Abstract*

The article analyzes the notions of plurilingualism and plurilingual identity through the prism of the concepts of multilingualism and multilingual identity and the perspective of the theories of bilingualism. The article suggests that plurilingual identity can be viewed as an objective in third language (second foreign language) teaching and contemplates specific characteristic imposed on a third language learner by the process of third language acquisition and the necessity of managing a certain imbalance between the degrees of language command and culture experience in different target languages.

Keywords: plurilingual identity, plurilingualism, multilingualism, bilingualism, third language acquisition.

Introduction

The current trends of the contemporary society, such as informatization, internalization, and globalization, have long put an ever-increasing demand onto society to master more than one foreign language. English as a second language has become a standard practice for many countries in the world, having established its position as an international language over the last century. However, at the pace the world is developing towards multicultural and multilingual societies, due to a variety of economic, political and social factors, it is becoming more obvious than ever that one foreign language learnt in addition to your mother tongue, hardly suffices anymore, which is widely reflected in the curricula of foreign language studies around the world. The amount of people learning more than one foreign language, usually subsequently, learning a new language after having made at least an initial acquaintance with another, has been growing, as a result of societal as well as educational processes.

Research Background

The terms “plurilingualism” and “plurilingual identity” put forth in this paper, are derived from a field of research that has gained extreme popularity in the last decades and has been developing extensively since 1990s, when the awareness of a new era of globalization gained widespread attention, and raised new questions concerning interaction and mutual understanding in multilingual and multicultural societies, with ensuing issues, such as mutual tolerance and effective intercultural communication. Devoted to a comprehensive study of multilingualism, this area of research became known as multilingual studies and multilingual literacies. Within the framework of this field, a lot has been written in the last decade on the issues connected to language and literacy practices among linguistic minority groups that function in a monolingual society that is different in the primary language and culture from their native one.

A whole new direction of linguistic studies have sprung up from the abundance of research based on the material plentifully provided by the contemporary life in Europe and the USA, above all, but also in the former Soviet republics and bilingual areas of the Russian Federation. The outset of research activities in this area was marked by very specific and practical subjects, sometimes limited by the observation of experience gathered by a given family, or a group of people, belonging to a certain linguistic minority, and the development of their interactions with the monolingual society where they have found themselves in, followed by gradual integration into the linguistic and cultural society in question. Various interlingual and intercultural phenomena, such as language

and culture interference have also become an object of research by a number of authors [2], [5], [7].

The problem of applying the experience set forth in multilingual studies to classroom teaching of languages, can be explained by the fact that the subjects commonly dealt with by multilingual studies refer primarily to what the theory of bilingualism calls “natural bilingualism”, as opposed to the artificial kind of bilingualism (also referred to as intentional, or formal bilingualism), acquired in the classroom in the process of conscious language learning. Natural bilingualism takes place in the natural language environment as the result of constant exposure to the target language and culture, and the indispensability of its daily use to perform various functions in the society. This forms the basis of our argument for the necessity of using the term “plurilingualism” in order to differentiate multilingual speakers from plurilingual learners of several foreign languages.

Legacy of the Theories of Bilingualism

As a research notion, bilingualism was first introduced in the 1950s, and gave rise to concepts of its classification, the special needs of bilinguals with regard to language acquisition, and an extensive list of phenomena that take place at the intersection of various languages and cultures, either leading to mistakes (language interference), or potentially facilitating the acquisition of certain aspects of the foreign language in question (language transfer) [9]. Some of the findings made with regard to natural bilingualism, have been successfully applied to the situations of artificial bilingualism, including those where two foreign languages are concerned. Russian researchers have used the theories of bilingualism as a starting point for a number of highly applicable and relevant research papers to be used in the teaching of the second foreign language.

The moment the term “bilingualism” was extended to use in the description of processes accompanying the acquisition of the third language (that is, the second foreign language) by the learners, a natural question was raised, whether the term “bilingualism” is applicable to what essentially is a situation of “multilingualism”. A lot of authors have argued that the terms can be used interchangeably, as “bilingual” in the broad sense refers to a type of language personality that has a sufficient, functional command of two or more languages [6], [8].

However, with the appearance of multilingual studies, it became obvious that bilinguals and multilinguals should not be treated as synonymous notions. One of the most important research findings, as obvious as it might seem, was the conclusion that the linguistic and cultural life of a trilingual is far more complex than that of a bilingual. Moreover, researchers have agreed that learners studying the second foreign language have certain advantages in comparison to the first foreign language learners [1]. The advantage of third

language learners in comparison to second language learners is described as “highly developed learning strategies, metalinguistic awareness and communicative sensitivity “ [3, 6]. With that discovery, terms like “trilingualism” has also come to existence, proving its justifiability for use in situations of subsequent or simultaneous learning of two foreign languages.

Plurilingual Identity

Having discussed the interconnection and interrelation of plurilingualism with such research objects as multilingualism and bilingualism, one needs to further explain the usefulness of the application of the notion of plurilingualism to the context of language teaching. The main objective of language teaching, be it the second or third language, has been formulated as the development of the communicative competence in a target language and a target culture. In the process of learning a language, a person acquires certain competencies that constitute their communicative competence, which becomes an integral part of a learner’s personality. Now, following this logic, the exposure to several foreign languages, contributes to the learner’s forming of a specific type of identity. Identifying characteristics of the plurilingual identity that is formed in the process of multiple language acquisition, in our opinion, is no less important than looking into the theoretical aspects of plurilingualism, such as factors influencing the processes of third language acquisition, either positive or negative, or analyzing practical aspects, such as specific types of mistakes, characteristic of given pairs of foreign/foreign and native/foreign languages. In the end, having a clear understanding of the type of identity that should be developed through plurilingual education, is crucial for defining the ultimate purpose of language teaching.

Attempts to describe multilingual identity have been undertaken in multilingual studies, however, in order to differentiate between the notions of multilingual and plurilingual identity, let us speak in more detail of the phenomena of “plurilingual identity” and “plurilingualism”, which seem more applicable to situations of the so-called artificial bilingualism (used here in its broad meaning).

From the beginning of the XX century, the official documents of the Council of Europe have started to postulate the necessity of speaking of plurilingualism and plurilingual competence in language teaching [4]. The introduction of the new term was explained by the necessity to differentiate between the competences required from a multiple language speaker in a multilingual society, to that of a language competence formed by a learner of several languages. Due to the fact that for natural reasons, multilingualism (command of several languages) can be sufficiently coordinated in the speakers’ levels of fluency in each language, the main difference between them being the social function of a given language, it is deemed important to find another way of defining a plurilingual speaker,

whose language competences are often formed outside of the native environment of the target language and culture.

The plurilingual speaker is characterized by the key features, stated by the authors of the original report, namely the difference in levels of proficiency in respective languages and different degrees of experiences of cultures, leading to a certain disbalance, or an uneven distribution, in the competencies/abilities of a plurilingual person. The strategic management of this disbalance is the essence of the formation of plurilingualism and pluriculturalism – a term, also coined by the authors of the report, following the general trend of transferring linguistic phenomena onto culture. The term “plurilingualism” is derived from the theories of bilingualism.

It should be noted that the term “polylingual” is used in a few English-speaking resources but the term “plurilingual” seems to have more potential in the English-speaking domain. At the same time, the Russian sources, however few at the moment, tend to give preference to “polylingual” (in Russian: “polilingval’niy”, “polilingval’nost”).

With reference to foreign language teaching, the concepts of plurilingualism and the formation of plurilingual identity, deserves special attention. Ever since the appearance of the theories of multilingualism, it has become obvious that the approach to view learning languages as forming individual competences, or simply putting several monolingual competences together, cannot be considered the ultimate objective of language teaching and learning, since it does not reflect the real state of things. The reality of language acquisition proves to us that foreign languages, learnt by a person, contact with each other as well as with the native language of the speaker. Communicative competence of the learners is formed on the basis of their entire language experience and their entire knowledge background that presents an extensive area of interlingual and intercultural interactions in the mentality of the learner. Specific linguistic, physiological, psychological and methodological features of the process of the third language acquisition provide rich material that can serve as a starting point for defining plurilingual identity to be formed in the process of third language teaching.

Conclusion

Plurilingualism is a developing concept, and its application to language teaching methodology is to be extensively researched yet. At this early stage, however, it seems obvious that the coordination of several language and culture systems in a mentality of a learner requires a special set of skills that constitute a unique variety of communicative competence, the formation of which is crucial for the development of plurilingual and pluricultural identity. Defining these notions further and building a third language teaching methodology upon the key features of plurilingual and pluricultural identity, can have an immense potential for third language teaching.

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