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Bilingualism as an important factor in managing the educational environment of a regional university

El bilingüismo como factor importante en la gestión del entorno educativo de una Universidad regional

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ABSTRACT:

The article examines how the issues of bilingualism and interlingual transfer influence the development of the educational environment in a regional university, and how they are reflected in the content, management and methodological training of Russian language teachers for schools with native (non-Russian) language of instruction. The authors consider theoretical and applied aspects that predetermine the specifics of managing the bilingual educational environment and the content of the main educational programs for training teachers and linguists in a regional university.

Keywords management of the educational environment, bilingual educational environment, bilingualism, interlingual transfer, teacher of philology, methodological training.

RESUMEN:

El artículo examina cómo las cuestiones de bilingüismo y transferencia interlingüística influyen en el desarrollo del entorno educativo en una Universidad regional, y cómo se reflejan en el contenido, la gestión y la formación metodológica del Ruso profesores de idiomas para escuelas con idioma nativo (no ruso) de instrucción. Los autores consideran aspectos teóricos y aplicados que predeterminan las especificidades de la gestión del entorno educativo bilingüe y el contenido de los principales programas educativos para la formación de docentes y lingüistas en una Universidad regional. **Palabras clave** Manejo del entorno educativo, ambiente educativo bilingüe, bilingüismo, transferencia interlingüística, profesor de Filología, formación metodológica.

1. Introduction

The relevance of this research stems from the fact that modern system of teacher training pursues to develop professional competence of would-be teachers for working in the multicultural educational environment. The phenomenon of bilingualism, a characteristic feature of modern society, and the issues of interlingual transfer associated with it, the need to take into account the specifics of future work in education determine the specifics of the management of the university educational environment, the selection of the content of the basic teacher training curriculum. The article aims to highlight the linguistic aspects of the transfer in methodological training of a Russian language teacher in the context of Yakutsk-Russian bilingualism. The main research methods are theoretical (comparative analysis of scientific academic papers), praxiometric (analysis of learning standards, educational programs, students' oral presentation), empirical (observation of the learning process, description of work experience). Theoretical and methodological aspects are viewed from the perspective of bilingualism and interlingual transfer being its natural phenomenon; the article analyzes typical interference errors of Yakut students when speaking Russian (phonetic, lexical, grammatical ones), as well as describes objective and subjective reasons for their occurrence. Applied aspects are considered on the example of the practices of training Russian language teachers for schools with native (non-Russian) language of instruction in the conditions of the bilingual educational environment of the North-Eastern Federal University. Within the university system of methodological training of Russian language teachers for schools with native (non-Russian) language of instruction, the crucial components are the systematic approach to training, the principles of the unity of theory and practice, class activities and independent work, the principle of gradual and systematic work, comprehensive practical training; linguistic and methodical subjects that equip students with knowledge of interfering languages and the specifics of teaching Russian to bilingual students; conducting teaching practicum to acquire the educational and methodological experience of working in the bilingual educational environment. The materials of this study may be of interest to the university management and staff, as well as teachers of Russian language.

Over the last decades, many countries have witnessed socio-cultural changes related to the increasing migration, which is reflected in all spheres of human life, including the system of education. Today, multiculturalism, bi- and poly-linguism are typical features of the educational environment in many countries.

In the multinational Sakha Republic (Yakutia), there are some specific features associated with language use due to the fact that there are two state languages (Russian and Yakut), five official languages (Evenki, Even, Yukagir, Chukchi, and Dolgan) and one working language (English). Russian language is spoken by 93% of the population of the republic; Yakut language – by 94% of Yakuts, of which freely – 84.5%, whereas 21.3% are better at understanding the Yakut spoken language, 41.1% prefer Russian and 37.6% are bilingual. The language of their native ethnos is spoken by 22% of Even, 5% of Evenks, 40% of Chukchi, 22% of Yukagir; about 1% of Dolgan, about 80% of Evenki and 60% of Evens name Yakut their native language. Thus, Yakut-Russian is the most common type of ethnic-Russian bilingualism in the republic. This exists in various forms, varying from genuine bilingualism when one has an approximately equal mastery of the two languages, to a very poor command of Russian language. In such linguistic environment, the dominant language plays a significant role, reaching the deep parts of the linguistic consciousness of non-Russians, speech behavior patterns depending on the communicative situation and, of course, purely linguistic issues – deteriorating speech culture, breaking or insufficient codification of literary norms.

Definitely, bilingual education is a powerful factor in the development of bilingualism, in particular, the Yakut-Russian one. At present moment, issues related to teaching the second (non-native) language and interlingual transfer, the methodological training of teachers for bilingual schools are becoming more relevant than ever before due to the latest trends in the socio-cultural development in Russia and the world.

2. Goals

The research aims to highlight the linguistic and methodological aspects of language transfer during methodological training of Russian language teachers in the conditions of Yakut-Russian bilingualism.

To achieve this goal, we set the following tasks: to consider approaches to studying bilingualism and language transfer; to describe the typical transfer errors and reasons for their occurrence in the Russian speech of Yakut students; to propose a model of methodological training of Russian language teachers implemented in a regional university in the conditions of Yakut-Russian bilingualism.

3. Literature review

The issues of bilingualism and transfer have been considered in research papers of many Russian (Vereshchagin 2014; Vinogradov 2002; Vishnevskaya 1997; Desheriev 1988; Zakiryanov 2011; Mechkovskaya 2000; Rosenzweig 1972, etc.) and international scientists (Weinreich 1974; Haugen 1987; Gass and Selinker 2008; Corder 1992; Li 2000; Baker 2006; Grosjean 2015; Bialystok 2016, etc.).

According to the widely used definition given by U. Weinreich, bilingualism is the practice of alternately using two languages, and persons doing this are called bilinguals (Weinreich 1974). This definition was elaborated by V.Yu. Rosenzweig, who sees bilingualism as "mastering two languages and regularly switching from one to another depending on the situation of communication" (Rosenzweig 1972, 9-10), while the level of the second language can vary from elementary to advanced and proficiency.

Having analyzed the research papers on bilingualism, we could determine two conceptual approaches to this issue: the first one assumes that the second language is approximately at the same level as the native one (Bloomfield 1973; Desheriev 1988), and the second approach admits significant differences in mastering these two languages, whereas the second language can be used in everyday communication (Haugen 1987; Macnamara 1967; Mackey 1977; Vereshchagin 2014; Rosenzweig 1972). In any case, bilingualism is seen a phenomenon that describes the ability of a bilingual person to communicate effectively enough in each of the two languages.

Language transfer occurs as a result of the interaction of two languages. From linguistic perspective, transfer, according to U. Weinreich and E. Haugen, represents deviation from the norms of any of the languages occurring in the speech of bilinguals due to language contact, that is, knowing other languages (Weinreich 1974; Haugen 1987). Many Russian scientists share this point of view, saying that the interference of two language systems leads to errors when speaking a non-native language or both languages (Mechkovskaya 2000). Some researchers define transfer as diviations from the norm and the system of the second language under the influence of the native one (Vinogradov 2002; Zakiryanov 2011). According to N.B. Mechkovskaya, transfer is caused by the fact that in the linguistic consciousness of a bilingual, certain features of the second (non-native) language are mistakenly compared to the structure of the main (native) language (Mechkovskaya 2000). Transfer is caused by such linguistic causes as complete or partial discrepancies in the system of languages or linguistic systems, that is why it can manifest itself in all structural elements of the language with such differences.

Psychologists consider transfer in relation to emerging obstacles and impediments that take place when transferring skills from one activity to another or when developing one habit under the pressure of another. Within sociolinguistic approach, language transfer is defined as "a deviation from pragmatic norms of a situation in which languages and language elements are strictly selected and used only in certain communities" (Bagana and Khapilina 2007, 67).

The methodology of language teaching views transfer as "the involuntary occurrence of various inaccuracies when a bilingual is speaking in a non-native language that occur under the

influence of the native language, violating the norms of the language being studied" (Zakiryanov 2011, 130). The methodological approach analyzes how to deal with such transfer; therefore, when teaching the methodology of the second (non-native) language, one should focus on all aspects of the transfer without which the teaching of the second (non-native) language cannot be effective.

Thus, the analysis of academic papers proves that language transfer is a complex, multidimensional phenomenon, characteristic of bilingualism and caused by various factors.

4. Materials and methods

The research was conducted at the Department of Philology in the Ammosov North-Eastern Federal University, schools in Yakutsk and village schools of the Sakha Republic (Yakutia) where students had their teaching practicum. In this study we applied the following set of methods: theoretical methods (comparative analysis of scientific academic papers), praxiometric (analysis of learning standards, educational programs, and students' oral presentations), empirical (observation of the learning process, description of work experience).

5. Results and discussion

Yakut-Russian bilingualism is of heterogeneous nature since it involves two unrelated languages: agglutinative Yakut language and inflected Russian. There are differences in all structural elements of these languages, which makes it difficult for Yakut students to master Russian language. Observations of Yakut students speaking Russian and the analysis of their utterances allowed us to conclude on some typical transfer errors.

Phonetic transfer. Phonetic interference errors result from differences in the phonological systems of Yakut and Russian languages. Both languages have some specific vowels and consonants: for example, in Russian – consonants [B, B', x, 3, 3', ϕ , ϕ' , μ , u, μ , μ] that cannot be found in Yakut. What is more, Russian language has the opposition of hard and soft consonants and free alternation of them within a word, whereas Yakut language is characterized by softening sounds occurring due to vowel harmony, when all consonants in the word can only be either hard or soft. In Russian language, consonants can be combined in different ways, and consonant blend can occur in any position – in the beginning, in the middle and in the end of the word; In Yakut language combining consonants is significantly limited, consonant blend cannot take place in the beginning or the end of the word (Dmitrieva 2002).

Due to differences in the phonological system of Yakut and Russian languages, the following typical transfer errors are observed when Yakut students are speaking Russian:

– replacing the sound in a Russian word that is absent in Yakut language, with another sound that their native language has: [6']едро – instead of [в']едро; [с]ырк – [ц]ырк; бре[м]но – бре[в]но;

– inserting a vowel sound in the consonant blend at the beginning or end of a Russian word: $\kappa[\omega]pac\kappa a$ – instead of $[\kappa p]ac\kappa a$; $\delta a \mu[\kappa a]$ – $\delta a \mu[\kappa]$;

– pronouncing a hard sound in a Russian word instead of soft and vice versa: мале[н]кий – instead of мале[н']кий; [т']ест – [т]ест; etc.

Phonological errors distort the way the word sounds as well as its meaning, and complicate communication; in addition, phonetic transfer often affects writing which leads to phonetic and spelling errors.

Lexical (lexical and semantic) transfer. Such errors occur as a result of transferring the meaning of words and the details of their lexical compatibility from one's native language to the studied one. The linguistic reasons for Yakut students making these mistakes when speaking Russian are the discrepancies in the semantic structure of the word, in its semantic field in both languages; discrepancies in the lexical compatibility and systems of associative links; the different quantitative composition of synonyms and their semantic differences, etc. These are also some typical lexical transfer errors:

– expanding the usage of a Russian word that has several meanings according to the model in Yakut language: пить суп (to drink soup) – instead of есть суп (to eat soup); in Yakut language the phrase "miinne is"/ "to drink soup" is a norm, whereas "miinne sieh"/ "to eat soup" is not used;

– the wider use of a polysemantic Russian word according to the model of Yakut language: *лицо стола (the face of the table)* – instead of *столешница (the top of the table)*; in Yakut language the table top is labeled using a phrase "*ostuol sireye"* (literally: "*the face of the table"*; in Russian such a phrase is not used, and the word "a face" carries other figurative meanings;

– failure to express different meanings synonyms have, wrong collocations: сломать чашку (to wreck a cup) – instead of разбить чашку (to break a cup); быстро бредёт (strolling fast) – быстро идет (walking fast); etc.

A specific group of lexical transfer mistakes made by Yakut students when speaking Russian is lexical derivational errors caused by differences in word formation in Yakut and Russian languages, ways of expressing affective and subjective evaluation, prefixes used in Russian language, many of which can express several meanings, and the absence of such in Yakut language, for example:

– inappropriate use of words with suffixes of subjective evaluation: большие зубки (big baby teeth) – instead of большие зубы (big teeth);

– confusion of paronyms: конские скачки (horsy racing) – instead of конные скачки (horse racing); ледяная переправа (icy bridge) – ледовая переправа (ice bridge); полей молока (to water some milk) – налей молока (to pour some milk); etc.

Grammatical (or morphosyntactic) transfer. When Yakut students are speaking Russian, language transfer also leads to all sorts of grammar mistakes. They stem from significant differences in the grammatical structure of Yakut and Russian languages: Yakut language having no category of the gender, opposed verbal aspects, some prepositions in Yakut language, the synonymy of prepositions in Russian, different ways of expressing the grammatical number, differences in the system of cases, differences in collocations and government of words, specific features of word order in interfering languages, etc.

Grammatical transfer errors in the Russian speech of Yakut students can be divided into two large groups – morphological and syntactic. Typical morphological mistakes are word formation, use of prepositions that violates the rules, for example:

– forms of the grammatical number of nouns: каникул – instead of каникулы; консерва – консервы; ребенки – дети; молодежи – молодежь;

– case forms of nouns; мылой – instead of мылом; тетрадем – тетрадью; в лесе – в лесу; numerals: к сто двадцать пять – к ста двадцати пяти;

– verb forms of the person: хочут – instead of хотят; verbal aspect and tense: буду посмотреть – посмотрю; grammatical mood: напишу бы – написал бы;

– the short form of the adjective: крепк – instead of крепок; degrees of comparison of adjectives and adverbs: ширче – шире; более труднее – более трудно;

– confusing prepositions *c* and *из*, *на* and *в*: *на поселке* – instead of *в поселке*; *со школы* – *из школы*; etc.

Syntactic transfer that takes place when Yakut students are speaking Russian manifests itself in deviations from the norms of government, norms of agreement in gender, case, violating the structure of a simple or complex sentence. These are some typical syntactic errors:

– violating the norms of the gender agreement between a definitive (adjectives, participles, etc.) and a word defined: *сильная ливень* – instead of *сильный ливень*; number: *трудные стихотворение* – *трудное стихотворение*; case: *ученикам, занимающихся спортом* –

ученикам, занимающимся спортом;

– putting the predicate in the end of the sentence according to the order of sentence parts in Yakut language: Вчера мы в музей мамонта ходили (Yesterday we to the Mammoth Museum went); etc.

It should be noted that the transfer errors in the Russian speech of Yakut students occur not only due to differences in the grammatical structure of these two languages, using their native language mostly, or a psychological barrier, but also due to insufficient mastery of the phonetic, lexical, grammatical aspects of Russian language. To deal with such transfer, one should have some basic knowledge of Russian, as well as language skills (phonetic, lexical, morphemic and word formation, morphological, syntactic).

The issues related to bilingual education, transfer, and professional training of teachers who can apply modern methods and technologies when teaching the second (non-native) language in the conditions of bilingualism were explored by a number of researchers in the Ammosov North-Eastern Federal University (Nikiforova and Ignatiev 2016; Olesova and Borisova 2016; Pribylykh 2013). The Department of Philology provides instruction within the following teacher training programs: bachelor programs for majors in Russian Language and Literature, Russian and Foreign Languages, a master program Interdisciplinary Links in Teaching Russian Language and Literature. Also, the Chair of the Methodology of Teaching Russian Language and Literature (the Department of Philology) offers a postgraduate course Education and Pedagogical Sciences for majors of Theory and Methodology of Education (Russian Language).

The content of educational programs is developed on the basis of federal state educational standards, the professional standard of the teacher and considers the specifics of the linguistic environment in the Sakha Republic (Yakutia). For instance, within educational programs of the bachelor degree, methodological training of a Russian language teacher includes mastering some compulsory courses and electives, including:

a set of linguistic courses "Contemporary Russian language", "Yakut language and culture of speech (for native speakers)", "Yakut language for beginners (for non-native speakers)", "Comparative lexicology", "Comparative typology of Russian and Yakut languages", "Introduction to translation studies";

 a set of methodological subjects: "Theory and methodology of teaching Russian language", "Corrective course of the methodology of teaching Russian language", "Teaching practicum on the methodology of Russian language", "Intercultural communication in Russian language lessons".

Within a master program, the methodological training of Russian language teachers includes studying such subjects as "Psychological foundations of bilingual education", "Comparative methods in linguodidactics", "Dialogue of cultures in language learning", "Integrative approach to teaching Russian language", "Interdisciplinary links in bilingual education", "Methods of culturological analysis of a literary text".

Methodological training implies using textbooks and teaching aids developed by the Department of Philology such as "Comparative grammar of Russian and Yakut languages", "Methods of teaching Russian in an ethnic school: 5-11 grades", "Methods of teaching Russian language in an ethnic school (in structural logical charts and tables)", "Teaching description skills at integrated lessons of speech development in the 7th grade of a Yakut school", "Development of students culturological competence at Russian and Literature lessons", "Technology of planning a Russian language lesson", "The regional component at the lessons of Russian language in secondary school" and others.

Teaching practicum is an integral part of the methodological training of Russian language teachers. In the system of methodological training, it is presented according to educational levels as follows:

- bachelor degree: teaching practicum (2nd, 3rd years of study), methodological practicum

(4th year), pedagogical practicum (5th year), pre-graduation practical training (5th year);

 master degree: introductory learning practicum (1st year), pedagogical practicum (2nd year), pre-graduation practical training (2nd year).

Practical training was conducted in the schools of Yakutsk and village schools, including Yakut schools which implement different models of bilingual education:

- model 1 - from 1 to 11 grades instruction is conducted in Yakut language;

 model 2 – instruction is in Yakut language, but at a certain stage there is a transition to Russian language: in the 5th grade (Yakutsk, some district centers), or in the 8th grade (typical of gymnasiums, lyceums), or in 10th grade in village schools);

- model 3 - from the 1st to the 11th grade Russian is the language of instruction, whereas Yakut is studied as one of the subjects (in Yakut classes with Russian as the language of instruction in the schools of Yakutsk and district centers).

Practicum in schools is organized in such a way that students have an opportunity to acquire experience in teaching and methodology, conducting Russian language lessons both in classes with Yakut or Russian as the language of instruction. All internships imply that students will master the specifics of methodological work of a Russian language teacher in the conditions of bilingual education and that within these undergraduate programs students will perform the following types of work:

- pedagogical practicum during the 2nd year of study: observation of the teacher methodological work, educational and cognitive activity of students; conducting an extracurricular class in Russian (a competition or a quiz); studying the speech of students-bilinguals, registering transfer errors in the observations diary; working with a class book and studying the academic performance of every student and the class as a whole at Russian language lessons;

 pedagogical practicum in the 3rd year: conducting trial Russian language lessons; checking students' works, identifying transfer errors in the speech of bilingual students; self-analysis of teaching and methodological work;

 methodological practicum in the 4th year: conducting a series of Russian language lessons; checking students' works, identifying and analyzing transfer errors in the speech of bilingual students; self-analysis of teaching and methodological work;

– pedagogical practicum in the 5th year: conducting a methodological experiment on the theme of the graduate qualifying paper, identifying and analyzing transfer errors in students' speech, determining ways to eliminate such mistakes (at the diagnostic stage), doing a methodological project (at the formative stage), monitoring students' performance in Russian language; selfanalysis of teaching and methodological work;

 pre-graduation practice in the 5th year: conducting a methodological (corrective) experiment on the theme of the graduate qualifying paper; systematization and generalization of experiment materials; self-analysis of teaching and methodological work.

Thus, the system of methodological training of Russian language teachers qualified to teach the second (non-native) language that is implemented at the Department of Philology is based on the systematic approach to training, the principles of the unity of theory and practice, class activities and independent work, the principle of gradual and systematic work, comprehensive practical training and mastering the methodology by students. A specific integrative component of vocational training, methodological training includes a set of linguistic subjects that equip students with the required knowledge of interfering languages; a set of methodological subjects provides students with the scientific and methodological basis for teaching Russian language, knowledge about the specifics of teaching it to bilingual students and ways to prevent and deal with interlingual transfer. The most important component of this system is teaching practicum, during which the obtained theoretical knowledge is used in practice, while students can master the required methodology and get the experience of educational and methodological work in the bilingual educational environment.

6. Conclusion

A common phenomenon in Russian regions and the world, bilingualism is actively studied by researchers in various scientific fields. Modern pedagogy studies bilingualism from a different perspective: organization of bilingual education, methodology of teaching the second (non-native) language (at all levels of education), methodology of teaching a foreign language (at all levels of education), methodology of teaching.

The Sakha Republic (Yakutia), with its Yakut-Russian bilingualism, has developed a system of bilingual education which involves education in two languages – Yakut and Russian. In addition to that, there is a system of vocational methodological teacher training for bilingual schools.

Our research covers the ways adopted by a regional university to deal with educational issues of bilingualism and language transfer, methodological training of Russian language teachers for working in bilingual schools. Obviously, further research is required for many of these issues.

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