

Complex Linguodidactics Diagnostics as an Effective Tool for Overcoming Language Attrition in Children-Hereditary Native Speakers of the Russian Language

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Abstract

The article describes ways to face the regression of the first Russian language in a bilingual child's speech. In the article considers the possibility of overcoming attrition in hereditary carriers by means of complex linguo-didactic diagnostics. Diagnostic data, as shown by the results of experimental training, can discern gaps and fill them in the course of bilingual education. Generally, metalinguistic skills are important in teaching bilingual children, which make it easy to transfer formed ideas from one language to another. This was previously well studied in the interaction of languages on an intercultural basis. Since the cognitive sphere is highly important in teaching a bilingual child, linguo-didactic diagnostics used in the learning process can be used as a tool for achieving educational results, language coordination, and a method of overcoming regression.

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1. Introduction

At present bilingualism is very common phenomenon. Due to increased mobility, cross-cultural and language connections, more and more children are being raised in bilingual families. As a consequence of these realities, it should be noted that bilingualism is not a singular phenomenon, since more than two-thirds of the world's population is to some extent bilingual or multilingual. The process of formation of an ethnolinguocultural multilingual society in the modern conditions of globalization, passes into the status of a social norm. As a result of these processes, a person of a new culture appears, combining several linguistic worlds.

Recently, in linguodidactics, there are more and more studies describing the phenomenon of individual multilingualism. As part of our research, we believe that in natural bilingualism, the question of which language is

first and which is second is decided separately for each specific situation and for each child individually, and the primacy of languages can be redistributed throughout life.

A Child is a special type of language personality that forms its own special view of the world and of itself in this world. The image of the world reflected in the language of children differs significantly from the "picture of the world" of adult speakers of language consciousness, which is explained by the peculiarity of children's thinking, the originality of their attitude and perception of the world.

To describe the language personality of a bilingual child in a limited language environment, it is necessary to distinguish the concepts of "first language" – "native language", "second language" – "non-native language" and "foreign language". "First language" and "second language" are languages that the child learns in

chronological order, and "native language", "non – native language" and foreign language are determined according to the individual's belonging to a particular society. The mother's language is considered to be the mother's language, acquired by the child from birth to 5-6 years. Sometimes the mother's language and the native language are the same, although in some cases a person may consider a native language that he does not know well. The first language, in turn, is the language learned first. In addition, a child's attitude to languages and the prestige of a language affect their language identity. Since language contains a common worldview and cultural meanings for native speakers, language identity is usually built through the language that is most commonly used in everyday human life. The degree of proficiency, in turn, is related to the frequency of use of languages. Consequently, language proficiency increases the more the language is used.

The study of language attrition (regression) of children who speak Russian but live outside the Russian Federation is particularly relevant in modern geopolitical conditions and provides an interesting field for research.

Sociolinguistic facts are well known: the environment of a bilingual child, and especially the school where he studies, determines the dominant position of the language, linking the language with the concept of social success. If the social status of the native language is not defined or low in the child's country of residence, it is usually replaced by the language of socialization. In the native language of the child, even if the previous good knowledge of it in early childhood, naturally there is a regression or phenomenon of language attrition.

We suggested, and this became the hypothesis of our study, that there are possible ways to overcome regressive language processes in hereditary native speakers of the Russian language, if we use complex linguo-didactic diagnostics in their training. Diagnostic data will allow detecting gaps and filling them in the course of home, additional or bilingual education. This determined the purpose of the work-the description of the linguodidactics tools that allow detecting the problems of the child in the first language and overcoming them in different ways, including using metalinguistic transfer.

The scope of the research included the study of existing diagnostic materials, the description of the idea of creating special complexes and testing of diagnostics among students of schools of additional education. Since the most important component of bilingual education is the cognitive sphere, the possibility of preserving the first language and overcoming language attrition becomes for them another chance of successful socialization and even intellectual development.

2. Materials and Methods

The modern theory of bilingualism is characterized by ambiguity, discursiveness, mobility of processes of interlanguage interaction. Despite the rich accumulated

material, the theory of bilingualism is not presented in the final terminological definitions and does not yet offer a universal methodological concept of teaching bilingual children in a limited language environment. In particular, there are a number of classifications that do not take into account the most important criteria for the typology of bilingualism – the degree of second language proficiency and the way two languages exist in the cognitive system of bilingualism.

The most significant at present are the classifications of L. V. Scherba (pure, mixed type), C. Osgood, S. Erwin (coordinated, mixed), W. Weinreich (subordinate), indicating the dominance of one of the languages in the speech activity of a bilingual person depending on a certain situation. In language teaching is of particular importance the theory of functional of the type of bilingualism developed by Karaulov.

The terminological apparatus describing the phenomenon of bilingualism includes such synonymous concepts as multilingualism, polylinguism, on the one hand, and bilingualism on the other hand. And bilingualism is a private form of multilingualism (polylinguism).

We adhere to the definition that bilingualism is understood as the active ability of an individual to speak, understand, read and write, think in two languages and automatically switch from one language to another, depending on the communicative attitude and sociolinguistic factors.

It is at an early age that latent mechanisms of language development and functioning appear in children's speech.

We can conclude that we are considering a completely different, unique linguistic personality, functioning in the conditions of two ethnolinguistic cultures. A bilingual child with Russian roots living outside of Russia (in our study in Spain) is in a limited language environment. In his mind there are two language systems, two pictures of the world, because the language of the country of origin and the language of the country of residence are native to him.

Bilingual education is based on a person's understanding of the perspectives of all languages in their later life. In recent decades, researchers around the world have been studying the phenomenon of language regression — language attrition) - the gradual loss of the first language against the background of a changing language environment. The destruction of the morphological, syntactic, phonetic systems of the native language occurs as competence develops in the new language of socialization: the interpenetration of concepts begins, the two language systems enter into competition.

Language regression manifests itself in deviations from the language norm in the form of grammatical errors, unaccountable transfer of speech skills, likening of two language systems. Most often there is a

simplification of the language, impoverishment of vocabulary, illegal borrowings, changes in syntax and intonation, the collapse of morphology, the appearance of accent, and slow access to the word from the passive vocabulary.

At the same time, recent research confirms the thesis about the cognitive advantages of bilinguals and the need to preserve and improve both languages in childhood, which makes bilingual education more attractive not only from the point of view of the child's development of a second language in the sensitive period [6], but also from the point of view of General intellectual development.

At the same time, the difference between communicative interaction and academic learning for the purpose of mastering a second language, that is, cognitive mastery of an academic language, is becoming more and more noticeable. We are convinced that the cognitive approach, rather than the communicative approach, becomes more effective way for bilinguals to learn a new language, and bilingualism is the key to the implementation of metalanguage analysis. In the course of strengthening the position of the studied language, academic skills implemented in the language of school education allow bilinguals to preserve their native language.

Modern methods of teaching Russian in different countries of the world are in need of forming control and measurement diagnostic materials to provide a comprehensive diagnosis of skills in native speakers and bilinguals. In our study, we propose a set of measures to fix the level of regression and its further overcoming. In a situation of language loss, the well-known diagnostic scale "language portfolio" (A1-C2) is almost useless, since bilinguals demonstrate a regressive, rather than progressive, scale in relation to the "first" language. The degree and nature of language regression is recorded by the diagnostic system, which allows for a comprehensive impact and prevent losses.

Note that the process of mastering the native language, speech ontogenesis in children develops in different ways. Therefore, we can assume that the metalanguage ability is manifested with the awareness (to a greater or lesser extent) of languages by empirical observation of language phenomena and speech in the first and second languages, as well as the practical application of the two language systems in their own speech. When language consciousness is formed as a certain degree of awareness of language phenomenon, metalanguage consciousness is also activated as an understanding of the secondary nature of the language code. Metalanguage skills of bilingual children arise on the basis of language ability and represent more complex way of reflecting language and patterns of speech activity. The key characteristic of the metalanguage ability is the child's conscious attitude to language and speech [11]. Bilinguals develop an analytical approach to both oral and written speech [1]. Communicative

interaction is also carried out in a social context, but it is less detailed than academic communication.

In our opinion, the formation of these skills is particularly affected by the linguistic factor that children face when learning systems of two languages:

- The presence of General language universals, when a complete transfer of knowledge and skills is possible;
- The presence of such language phenomenon that exist in both languages studied, but have a significant difference (this is a favorable ground for the manifestation of interference errors in speech);
- Specific language phenomenon that exist only in the studied language (knowledge and skills are re-formed).

L. S. Vygotsky also wrote that reliance on the native language facilitates the assimilation of a non-native language and is important in the development of thinking: "a Child learns a foreign language, having already a system of meanings in the native language, and transferring it to the sphere of another language" [6].

The fact that there is a language universal requires them to be taken into account when teaching hereditary speakers, because it allows them to develop their language, including metalanguage, abilities, and increase cognitive interest in languages.

So, in order to determine the research dominant, we took as a basis the typology of Olli Kuure [2], which was interpreted in the idea of the theory of cultural and historical development of Vygotsky L. S. [6].

O. Kuure conducted research in the conditions of Finnish-Swedish bilingualism, during which he identified the presence of bilingualism in an individual child through three factors:

- Social environment in which the child learns languages;
- Age;
- Semiotic factors, that is, the relative dominance of one language over another in various types of social activity of this child.

In this case, the second language, according to the scientist, develops through the first language. Following Vygotsky L. S., Shcherba L. V., O. Kuure emphasizes the special importance of the native language as the most important factor influencing the successful study of the second language when it comes to other types of bilingualism. So, in the typology of Olli Kuure there are terms: *simultaneous* (*simultaneous*), *subsequent* (*successful*), *subordinate* (*subordinative*) types of bilingualism [2]. The search for terminology for fixing regression processes led us to the idea of combining the formal designations of the European language portfolio [9] and the Vereshchagin System [5], which identified the *receptive*, *reproductive* and *productive* levels of bilingualism. Due to the peculiarities of children's age in

all types of tests, it is assumed that there is a large amount of visual support in the formulation of tasks.

Thus, we offer a system of complex measurements of communicative and academic (General educational) skills of bilinguals. The complex of aspects is measured:

- perception of speech by ear (listening),
- perception of written speech (reading),
- production of written speech (writing),
- oral speech (speaking),
- lexical and grammatical tasks are performed.

Moreover, the submodules of speaking and reading are evaluated by testers and diagnosticians in the mode of individual work with the child. Tasks in each section have a different degree of complexity and are focused on the diagnosis of both groups:

1. *Crown speakers, receptive bilinguals or foreign language.* The receptive level is characterized by the child's ability only to comprehend speech in a second language. This indicator indicates the inability to demonstrate coherent articulate speech. In childhood, the absence of speech in the language – the most important quality that indicates the degree of language proficiency. In accordance with the diagnostic tasks, this level can be defined as level A1. 1. Reproductive bilingualism is characterized by the ability to reproduce (quote or create a cliché) information. Receptive and reproductive types of bilingualism are focused on speech perception and can correspond to levels A1. 1-A2.2. the pan-European scale of skills in a foreign language.

2. *Productive bilinguals*, indicators of levels B. 1. 1 and further. Productive bilingualism is characterized by the ability to comprehend and create a text in a second language, the ability to create a speech work. E. M. Vereshchagin notes that a conscious and self-formed speech expression may be incorrect, but even such speech will allow the transfer of information without loss [5], which is necessary in the conditions of academic training of bilinguals.

The created diagnostics allows for centralized monitoring of the level of Russian language proficiency in all age groups from 5 to 14 years. The degree of language attrition is predicted in linguistic units for each marked level. To determine whether or not there is a regression, a minimum of two time-delayed measurements are required.

3. Findings

Russian-speaking children living in the South of Spain (Marbella, Olga Pakhomova's educational center), aged 7-13 years, found that children who academically study Russian in the conditions of Saturday school, present language and communication skills, correlated with the levels of monolinguals-native speakers in the amount of 64%, which indicates a high level of preservation of the native language. 32% of children showed characteristic

mistakes of foreigners-Spaniards who study Russian, but the level of speech and the degree of formation of basic communication skills still remained at a productive level. A small group (4% of children) showed persistent regression, which is associated with their motivational and psychological characteristics.

In order to detect language regression, specially designed tasks were offered to children in the "vocabulary and grammar" submodule. The first series of tasks revealed the understanding of synonymic and antonymic relations of words.

The second series of tasks allowed to study the language guess of children, including:

- Ability to separate the sound form from the meaning of the word;
- The ability to select the appropriate meaning of the word based on the context (contextual guess);
- The ability to modify the sound composition of a word (correct one sound), to restore the form of a word in accordance with its meaning in the context (reconstructive guess).

The third series of tasks is focused on checking the mechanism of transposition and the degree of interference at the intra language level:

- The ability to identify a common root in words, to find an "extra" word in one row of similar words;
- Ability to compose a word by analogy by transposition of a part of a word;
- The ability to identify a word with an inappropriate meaning in the same row of similar words.

The fourth series of tasks is aimed at identifying the features of transposition and elimination of interference at the interlanguage level, including the ability to translate from one language to another.

The fifth series of tasks was non-standard in nature, to identify the ability to reason about the language in speech, including the grammatical form and figurative meaning of language units.

The novelty of this diagnosis lies in the fact that all the tasks to the texts used in the submodules "Read" or "listening" had the cognitive (meta -) communicative orientation for bilingual children who speak Russian as a native, and for children learning Russian as a foreign language.

4. Conclusion

Thus, overcoming language attrition (regression) in hereditary native speakers of the Russian language can occur if they use a multi-level linguo-didactic diagnostics in their training, which allows them to detect problems and comprehensively affect them. The diagnostic scale covers all types of speech activity and lexical and grammatical tasks. Academic skills acquired in one language can be projected into another language,

including through metalinguistic transfer, which improves the quality of learning and prevents regression. The experiment conducted in the course of the study proved the need to select special tasks "towards regression", and provided stability of the acquired skill.

The practical results of this research will help to implement bilingual educational models in different schools of the world, which will be accompanied by a qualitative development of the child's cognitive sphere, the formation of which is considered in line with the psychological and didactic concept of personal development.

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