

RAISING THE ISSUE OF THE EMOTIONAL CAUSES OF SELF-EXPRESSION FAILURES IN LINGUISTIC CONTEXT

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ZUSAMMENFASSUNG. *Die Problematik des emotionalen Grundes der Ausdrucksschwierigkeiten im linguistischen Bezug.* Die folgende Studie betrachtet einige relevante Aspekte der Forschungen bezüglich der asymmetrischen Zweisprachigkeit in dem Kontext des Unterrichts Rumänisch als: Nicht-muttersprache. In diesem Zusammenhang bilden die Unterrichtsstrukturen der Sprachen der Minderheiten den Kern der Forschung. Das Ziel der Vorstellung der Ergebnisse und der bisherigen Schlussfolgerungen beinhaltet zum einen die Bestimmung und die Interpretation der Korrelationen zwischen diesen Elementen und zum anderen die Definition neuer Forschungsperspektiven, die das tiefergehende Verstehen dieses Fenomens beeinflussen. Die Schlussfolgerung der Studie betont die Notwendigkeit einer tiefergehenderen Betrachtung der emotionalen Basis der Ausdrucksschwierigkeiten in einer Nicht-muttersprache.

1. Introduction

The aim of the present paper is to summarise recent research findings concerning the institutionalised asymmetric bilingual situation of learners of Romanian as a non-native language in schools teaching in minority languages. In the first section we would like to place the researches carried out into theoretical context. Later we analyse the data of some relevant field research in order to describe the present state of bilingualism in some special cases. Our findings will lead us to formulate future suggestions concerning the ways to be followed in favour of improving the effectiveness of Romanian language teaching in schools with an overwhelmingly minority native language environment. In the conclusion we would also like to open up new horizons that seem worthy of being studied closely, namely the linguistic exploration of the questions on the emotional aspects of bilingualism.

2. Conceptual background

Given the fact that research findings and results in the field of bilingualism vary on a large scale, first we would like to make clear our theoretical approach to this issue, explaining the context of our point of view. In literature there are different kinds of definitions of foreign language (Tej K., 2006; Doughty, 2006; Romaine, 1995; Cummins, 1984), and, in the case of ethnic minorities one cannot simply say that they are speakers of a foreign language or average bilingual speakers. So, in this section we start with the explanation of the concept of non-native language, as a different

phenomenon from that of the foreign language. In favour of this, we will give a short description of the concept of language and its connection to the representation of the speaker's world. Finally, we will put it into a philosophical context in order to make clear the differences between foreign language and non-native language, and to reach a better understanding of the bilingual phenomenon.

It seems to be easy to understand what language is, but one may face serious problems when it is closely studied. We suggest using as a preliminary definition Eugen Coșeriu's description (Coșeriu, 1995), where we can read that language is of historically constituted nature, and language is a linguistic act of a community of individual speakers, a kind of heritage of former states of the community, that makes possible every meaningful expression of that community, or, in other words, verbal manifestations of the members of the given community. One can easily see from this point of view that language is not a simple treasury of words and concepts systematised by the grammar of the given language, or of linguistic and meta-linguistic knowledge, but something more complex. If we take the concept of meaning in a broader and more abstract way, we can find that every language represents the world as meaningful, which is clearly more than just the mentioned linguistic and meta-linguistic system.

So, language is an implicit theory of the world (Wittgenstein, 1995), which gives the framework for every individual speaker to formulate sentences and meaningful texts, which are surely part of a discourse understood by other speakers of the given language, but only within the named framework. The language used by individuals represents not only its own perception of the world, that is to say, its own world, but it is also possible to be understood by others, even if their linguistic acts are totally different. Let us take as an example Ion Barbu's metaphor of "second play" on poems, which are quite different representations of the real and common world, but other speakers of the given language have to be able to understand its complex, implicit meaning.

From this follows that language acquisition cannot be taken as a simple act of reactivating linguistic and meta-linguistic knowledge, but it presupposes the understanding of the world of the other language and its meaning. As a consequence, the criterion of efficient second language acquisition means the ability to use the second language similarly to the vernacular. As we have already pointed out, using a language presupposes a representation of the world (Szilágyi N., 1996), but every representation is specific and individual, even though it is placed into the framework of a language, e.g. into the world of a language. In this case we can conclude that language acquisition means the understanding of the other's world as a meaningful representation. This approach is quite similar to that of Jacques Derrida's (Derrida, 1996), who wrote that understanding of another

language presupposed the perception of the Other (the speaker of the other language) as a monolingual Other.

If this is the case of the Other's language, which is historically constituted and also culturally embedded in the community of the Others, we shall say that bilingualism also means bi-culturalism and if the speaker uses the second language efficiently, it leads to a kind of multicompetence too (Pavlenko, 2005). The general definition of bilingualism dealt with the bilingual speaker as if it was a speaker of two distinct languages, who had distinct compound states of mind for both languages (Bartha, 1999). In our view, bilingualism is a process of activation of linguistic competences during interpersonal communication, within which the Self's communicational intentions are manifested as embedded in a cultural- and socio-linguistic context. So we would like to define bilingualism in a holistic way, and as a state of existence of the human being or *Dasein* (Gadamer, 1975), that can be attached to different language frameworks or contexts, but can never be totally translated, because "there is a significant amount of positive and negative transfer between them, oftentimes referred to as bidirectional transfer or cross-linguistic influence" (Pavlenko, 2005. 11).

In literature one can find detailed typologies of the phenomenon of bilingualism (Tej K., 2006; Grosjean, 1998; Bartha, 1999), but in the context of our paper we find most tailor-made the following. In this interpretation we can speak about a second language, which means that a speaker of a second language is a person who uses a language learnt not in his or her childhood, and this is the language learnt after the person's native language. Foreign language acquisition is a process of language learning following the native language acquisition, and it is not supported by the language of the environment, so in the case of minorities one cannot use this term. As we argued in previous texts on minorities' language acquisition (e.g. Tódor, 2005), the appropriate concept to be used is non-native language, which means that the speaker learns a language, different from the native one, which is found as active in the person's indirect environment, and is a precondition of the person's social inclusion. In the present paper we use the term non-native language acquisition for the Romanian language learning process in schools teaching in different minority languages in Romania.

3. Previous results

In Romania, based on the 2002 census, the rate of national minorities is 10.5%. The largest population is the Hungarian one, representing 6.6% of the total population, but we can also find Ukrainians and Germans (0.3% both), Serbs and Slovaks (0.1%), Czechs (0.02%), etc. In the Romanian educational system there are three different models of institution for schools of minorities. The first category is that of the schools where native language teaching is optional on the basis of the parents' needs, but all the other disciplines are thought in Romanian. The second category is characterised by the fact that teaching is limited only to some

disciplines in the native language, so the usage of the vernacular is partly ensured. The third one is described by the overall usage of the first language while pupils also study Romanian language and literature. These three types of minority schools represent 5.33% of all undergraduate school population in Romania. The phenomenon of bilingualism is most emphasized in the third category of schools, so in the last ten years we tried to study closely, by means of field research and statistical analysis, the pedagogical and linguistic state of Romanian language teaching and acquisition in these kinds of schools, in the case of Hungarian, German, Ukrainian, Serbian, Slovak and Czech institutions.

In the 2000-2001 academic year we made a survey based on quantitative field research that targeted teachers by questionnaires and pupils' compositions (1,500 compositions in total) on given topics, in selected schools with teaching in the language of the above mentioned minorities. During the survey we asked 450 teachers and 400 pupils of the final stage of institutional bilingualism, i.e. of the 12th grade (Tódor, 2005). The next research activity was held during 2002 and 2003, when we tried to measure the effect of the usage of active methods in developing communicative culture in the non-native language, i.e. in Romanian. In this case I focused on the effectiveness of Romanian language acquisition in schools teaching in Hungarian, using two groups where the communicative method was applied and two others as control groups. By active method we meant the tools of improving pupils' self-expression in the target language (Tódor, 2005). The third research we would like to mention was held in the academic year 2004-2005. In this study we collected data by means of classroom research using questionnaires and diary research in classroom context measuring the code-switching phenomenon, putting an emphasis on its role in the didactic conversation (Mackey, 2005; Romaine, 1995; Scheu, 2000). The questionnaires were collected from 164 teachers of Romanian language and from 664 pupils of 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th grades in schools in Harghita and Covasna counties, where pupils live their everyday life in a predominantly native language environment; diaries were made in a vast number of lessons: 1,012.

In the next few paragraphs we would like to widen the horizon of understanding the phenomenon of bilingualism as it shows itself in the context of schools teaching in minority languages based on the above mentioned selected research findings. In favour of doing so, first we would like to show two kinds of detailed categorisation of linguistic difficulties, then we will introduce the term of asymmetric or so-called unbalanced bilingualism placed in this given context. Thirdly, we give some details on the effects of active methods on improving pupils' self-expression skills. Last but not least we try to describe the very inspiring phenomenon of metaphoric code-switching (Wardhaugh, 2005) that opens up new fields for future research activities.

One aim of the research made in favour of analysing the quality and deficiency of self-expression in the non-native language was describing the

typology of expression difficulties widening the model made by Ellis Rod (Rod, 1995). In the table below one can find some typical examples of the subcategories of difficulties too.

Table 1.
Types of expression difficulties

Types of difficulties	Subcategories	Examples
1. Competential deficiencies (mistakes)	1.1. Transfer mistakes	
	1.1.1. Creativity through analogy	<i>muritul</i> (correctly: mortul); <i>nouător</i> (correctly: inovator); <i>planifchez</i> (correctly: planific)
	1.1.2. Structure transfer	<i>Să spune;</i> <i>El e 14 ani.</i>
	1.2. Intralinguistic mistakes	Verbs e.g. tu știi, tu obții
	1.3. Interlinguistic (interference) mistakes	
	1.3.1. Pronunciation mistakes	halușina, harmonie
	1.3.2. Morphological mistakes	Cravata tatei, S-a îndrăgostit în mine.
	1.3.3. Syntactic-semantic mistakes	<i>Ei erau într-o stare de nimic.</i> <i>Am văzut un copac de măr.</i>
2. Performance deficiencies (errors)	2.1. Processing errors	Word for word translation, cacophony, difficulties in fluency etc.
	2.2. Communicative strategy errors	

By competential deficiency we mean that communicative ability is not interiorised enough, on the other hand, performance deficiency is characterised by the inappropriate ability of using the competential skills because of their inadequate level. Within the competential ones we argue for distinguishing the subcategory of transfer mistakes, that is the term for the usage of non-native language patterns. This transfer, as the examples clearly show, can be observed as formulating words in the target language, especially manifested in mistaken endings, which can be called creativity through analogy. Transfer mistakes often take shape of overtaking whole sentence structures.

Intralinguistic mistakes refer to mistakes that can be made by native speakers of the target language because of the inadequate level of applying meta-linguistic norms or can be caused by the lack of attention of the person in question. On the contrary, interlinguistic mistakes are driven by the interference of the two languages, i.e. the negative transfer of native language knowledge to non-native language speaking. This latter group can be found at different levels of the linguistic system, such as at the phonetic, morphologic and syntactic-semantic levels.

The category of errors is highly influenced by the fluency shown in the field of the first category, and refers to deficiencies of processing and to the errors of communication strategies of the individual. Processing errors are driven by language planning and processing difficulties of the speaker, but also have negative impact on the mistakes detailed above, so we may say that errors and mistakes are in close interdependency. These errors are likely to be manifested as word for word translations, limited sensibility to pleonastic expressions, cacophony or difficulties in fluency. Communicative strategy errors are present at different levels, e.g. in defective interactions between locutional, illocutional and perlocutional acts.

Whether we are speaking of the categories of mistakes or errors, it strongly follows from our research that all these deficiencies are influenced or indirectly caused by the attitude the person showed concerning the acquisition of the non-native language. Nevertheless these attitudes vary on the person's experiences gathered during the learning process and are highly individual, one can define two groups of them. The first group is characterised by concentrating on the global sense of willing to communicate in the non-native language. In this case the correctness of the self-expression in linguistic terms is not dominating, the overall aim is to forward the message to the speakers of the non-native language. The second group of attitudes underlines the importance of the correct usage of the meta-linguistic system, so the self-expression in the non-native language is not easily formulated and often leads to be reduced to silence concerning topics for which the person does not have appropriate vocabulary, or using a reductionist strategy failing to take part in the conversation save by using simple sentences or single words only.

The attitudes described may lead to two groups of deficiencies, namely overt errors and covert errors (Corder, 1981). From studying the two different typologies, i.e. the first which was formulated from the communicative-functional perspective, and the second which dealt more with the issues caused by different attitudes of language learners, it follows that there is a need for a more complex, interdisciplinarily based approach of the question of deficiencies in non-native language acquisition.

We would like to add that in the case of the target groups in question we shall speak about a special form of bilingualism, e.g. about institutional asymmetrical bilingualism. This expression refers on the one hand to the incongruity between the abilities of expressing in non-native language and in native language, and on the other hand this acquisition mostly derives from institutional context and not from spontaneous learning processes. The measure of this incongruity or unbalance is different for every single person in the target group, and is determined by the characteristics of the inherited language, by the direct language environment of the person and by the quality or efficiency of the institutionalised form of language teaching.

As our researches in the field of errors and mistakes showed, both errors and mistakes are highly dependent on the possibilities the person might realise in communicative situations, and the level one can reach in non-native language fluency derives partly from the ability to take part in lifelike communicational situations, it is now time to point out that more emphasis should be put on improving these skills. The already mentioned experimental research measuring the impact of active methods of developing communicative-functional culture in the non-native language, i.e. Romanian, in schools teaching in Hungarian, dealt with measuring the following competencies:

- the competence of activating linguistic experiences in the non-native language
- the competence of comprehensive reception of oral and written messages
- the competence of creating messages
- awareness of the effects of linguistic interferences (the meta-linguistic awareness or the consciousness of code-switching)

Statistically relevant differences between the target group and the control group were found at the first three levels, but no significant differences could be obtained at the fourth competence level. In the target group we faced the significant restructuring of declarative and procedural linguistic acquisition after one academic year of application of the mentioned method (Tódor, 2005). So from these results we can deduce that implementing active methods may reduce the occurrence of both mistakes and errors significantly, having their positive impact on productive or textual skills, but the improvement of meta-linguistic awareness and judgments was only partly present. In this context we can say that it is true that the issues concerning errors and mistakes are interdependent and can be simultaneously treated, but there is also a need for linguistic intervention that can build awareness of code-switching by applying contrastive thinking management and stimulation of conscious usage of native language experiences while processing non-native language messages. In the latter case we would like to underline the term conscious, because it is apparent from the previously introduced research that mistaken or malfunctioning application of the vernacular experience can lead to inter-linguistic mistakes.

In favour of a more profound understanding of the issue concerning meta-linguistic awareness in the context of institutional asymmetric bilingualism we have tried to carry out a massive classroom research. As we have already mentioned, empirical data was collected in a predominantly native language environment, where the rate of native Hungarian speakers is 84.6% (Harghita county) and 73.8% (Covasna county) based on the 2002 census. We have tried to analyse the linguistic characteristics of didactic conversations during Romanian language and literature lessons. The presence of code-switching in these situations is sometimes conscious and sometimes just spontaneous both in the case of pupils and teachers. We have concluded that code-switching is

caused by two language educational or organisational factors. One factor is based on the tension between the expectation of the curriculum and the socio-linguistic knowledge of the pupils which can be dispelled in the given situation only by the usage of the native language as a tool for explanation and for making pupils understand the contents formulated in the non-native language.

The second factor is of explicit pedagogical kind, namely the teaching staff is not fully prepared for implementing the normative curricular prescriptions on communicative-functional pedagogic principles. Having this in mind, it is not really striking that pupils of the above mentioned two counties prefer to use metaphoric code-switching, which was observed in nearly all lessons and was reported both by questionnaires and classroom diaries. Metaphoric code-switching took the form of the usage of native language in informal, or more personal situations, while formal, institutionalised conversations were characterised by the overwhelming use of the target language. So we can see that the present institutionalised language teaching can activate mostly formal types of language practice from which follows that it contributes to the establishment of the unbalanced character of bilingualism and does not lead to the desired level of multi-competence. We would like to summarise our findings on the present agents of the formation of unbalanced institutionalised bilingualism in the figure below.

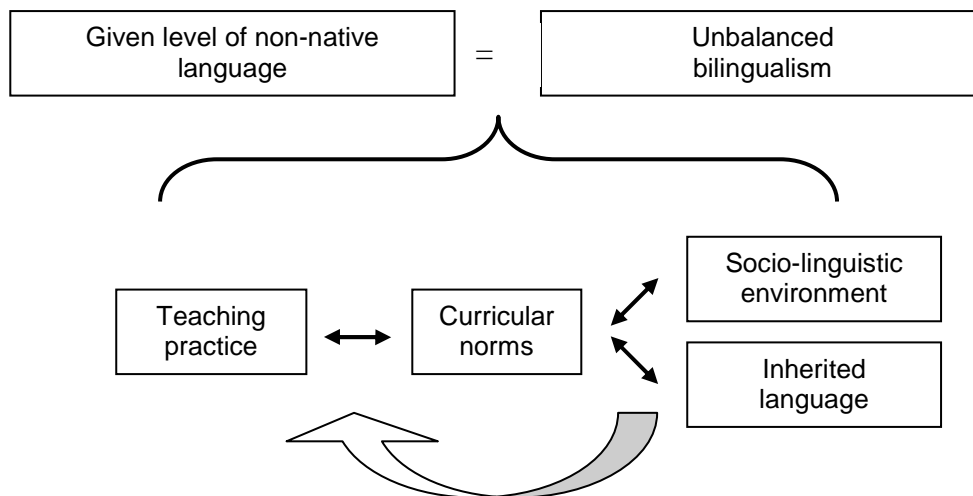


Figure 1. Establishment of institutionalized unbalanced bilingualism

4. Conclusion

In our present paper we tried to summarize different relevant aspects of research findings concerning non-native language acquisition in

schools teaching in the languages of some selected minorities in Romania. The major goals of these findings have led us to conclude that there is an urgent need for the application of contrastive approach both in curriculum planning and in teaching practice besides the normative implementation of active methods of developing the communicative culture, because results showed that at a certain level this latter approach does not have enough effect. We would like to underline the necessity of further linguistic research in favour of a more appropriate curriculum planning in the field of the Romanian language teaching system. We suggest stressing the question of awareness building of the teachers working in the environment described, particularly concerning the use of code-switching and regarding the special nature of groups of pupils in question. We also add that one might not set aside the fact that characteristics of non-native language skills of groups of pupils highly depend on the nature of socio-linguistic background and on the parameters of the language environment.

In conclusion we want to come to the point that there is a very inspiring new context that is surely worth examining deeply. We have already mentioned above the phenomenon of metaphoric code-switching that could be observed frequently in classroom context during Romanian language and literature lessons in the schools studied. One can easily see that there is more emotional charge in these communication solutions, which means that the phenomenon cannot be fully understood by means of pure psycho-pedagogical research.

We can argue in favour of the new approach based on the phenomenon of communicative strategy errors, which often leads to silence. There is no need to say that silence cannot be taken as an effective act in communication, and as all communicational malfunction, this act has its negative role in the formation of frustration concerning communication in the non-native language. These negative emotions also play a major role in strengthening the ineffective strategy of reduction or silence, and non-native language learning failures can be a cause of language anxiety.

In order to put communicational anxiety into a wider context, we shall add that it has its unpleasant effect on the person's social exclusion state, and to some extent it is equal to self-exclusion, because it is based on the already introduced communicative strategy error, even if it was not consciously chosen by the person in question. All these issues, namely the phenomenon of metaphoric code-switching, opted silence in certain situations and communicative anxiety, can guide us to raise the question of emotional context.

Previous empirical and theoretical researches in the field of psychology and educational sciences have already made a vast effort in order to describe the nature of the bilingual speaker and of the non-native language acquisition process, especially concerning the motivation of the learner and the impact of prejudices or stereotypes. Most of these scientific activities focused on the

connectivity of language and thinking, on neurolinguistic features of language learning and on the interdependency of language and cognitive development. We try to suggest that another necessary precondition of understanding the nature and the causes of asymmetric bilingualism lies in the linguistic exploration of the emotional aspects of bilingualism, like closely studying linguistic matters concerning non-native language anxiety.

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